

The move upmarket that led to a cabinet minister's fall from grace

By ANDREW GRICE
Political Editor

THE ROAD TO RESIGNATION

PETER HAS got new friends - he has joined the salon tendency, one of his close allies complained shortly after last year's general election. "For some reason, he is impressed with the Saatchis and the Charles and Carla Powell set. He should remember his roots."

An integral part of Mr Mandelson's new life was his new £475,000 house in Notting Hill, one of the smartest neighbourhoods in west London. His move puzzled the many friends who had lived near him in Islington; they wondered why the New Labour stronghold in NI was no longer good enough.

But few of them would have guessed that his move upmarket would sow the seeds of his rapid and astonishing fall from grace yesterday, only five months after entering the Cabinet as Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Friends did wonder where the money for the new house had come from. They had no idea that he had turned to Geoffrey Robinson, a millionaire Labour MP languishing on the back benches in 1996 when the fateful £375,000 loan was sealed, who later became Paymaster-General. At the time, details of Mr Robinson's offshore trusts and business links with the media tycoon Robert Maxwell had not emerged. To Mr Mandelson, he seemed safe.

The two men agreed to keep their astonishing arrangement a secret. At the time, it suited them both. With hindsight, Mr Mandelson admits he should have told Tony Blair - and, crucially, his top civil servant at the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) when he won promotion to the Cabinet in July.

The dark secret returned to haunt Mr Mandelson this month as he heard rumours about the contents of a hostile biography of him by Paul Routledge, the *Mirror* columnist, to be published in the new year. The word was that the book's "unique selling point" was the Robinson loan.

Reports also reached Mr Mandelson that Charlie Whelan - his sworn enemy, press secretary to the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, and a close friend of both Mr Routledge and Mr Robinson - had boasted over drinks with journalists that he had "got the story out". Mr



Theories abound about who told the press of Peter Mandelson's loan from Geoffrey Robinson, and why

Polly Borland/Katz



government's agony. At least if he resigned quickly, he might be able to safeguard his integrity.

Mr Mandelson feared that at the DTI he was in the wrong department to do an effective job after the disclosures. He knew the media were bound to judge his performance against the background of the Robinson affair - and to seek more damaging revelations.

He probably calculated that, as a backbencher, it would be easier to withstand the barrage of allegations about his private life, which he expects in the Routledge biography.

Mr Blair, who by now had time to digest a full report by Downing Street officials on the affair, was pessimistic about his friend's prospects but reluctant to abandon him. He told Mr Mandelson to "sleep on it" and not make a final decision until the morning. But both men knew he would have to resign. "We knew the game was up," one close ally admitted.

Rumours that Mr Mandelson might resign began to circulate at Westminster after Jack Cunningham, the Cabinet's enforcer, appeared to distance the Government from him in a BBC Radio 4 interview yesterday morning, admitting that mistakes had been made.

Press speculation that Mr Mandelson may have misled the Britannia Building Society by not revealing the Robinson loan when he obtained a mortgage showed that the storm was far from dying down. However, this was not mentioned when Mr Mandelson rang Mr Blair at 10am yesterday and told him: "In the cold light of day, it is clear I have to resign."

"Peter's mind was made up. He was very upset, but he felt it was the right thing to do," Mr Blair's spokesman said. This time, a sad and subdued Prime Minister did not stand in his way.

Mandelson assumed this meant that Mr Whelan had tipped off Mr Routledge about the loan.

In the event, the story surfaced before the book in both Mr Routledge's newspaper and *The Guardian* on Tuesday. Mr Whelan strongly denies that he was the source, and the Brown camp suspects that Mr Mandelson's allies may have launched a pre-emptive strike against the Routledge biography aimed at "getting the story out of the way" during Parliament's Christmas recess. The Mandelson camp dismisses the idea that it leaked the damaging revelation as "too ludicrous for words".

On Wednesday last week,

Mr Mandelson got wind that the story was about to break. On Thursday, his office at the DTI tipped off Alastair Campbell, the Downing Street press secretary and a friend of Mr Mandelson's as they are the Prime Minister's two most influential allies.

Mr Campbell told Mr Blair, who responded by looking anxiously at his watch: he was about to make a Commons statement on the previous night's bombing of Iraq. None the less, he ordered that Sir Richard Wilson, the Cabinet Secretary, should investigate whether Mr Mandelson had breached the code of conduct for ministers.

Sir Richard concluded that

Mr Mandelson had "insulated" himself against any conflict of interest by standing down from handling the DTI inquiry into Mr Robinson's business activities in September.

Mr Blair hoped that would be the end of the matter and, in any case, had his hands full with Iraq. But Mr Mandelson spent an anxious weekend, at first in his Hartlepool constituency and then at his Notting Hill home. He feared that the only reason his ticking timebomb had not gone off was the air strikes on Iraq.

Discussing his fightback strategy with close friends, including Mr Campbell, he hoped

he would be able to survive the storm about to break around him. "It was perfectly legitimate for Geoffrey to help me. He is just a generous soul. He gave me a loan I will repay in due course, with interest," Mr Mandelson said.

At 5pm on Monday, he knew the story would break the following morning, and prepared for a gruelling 24 hours of media interviews, starting on BBC TV's *Newsnight* programme on Monday. As details from the first editions emerged, he knew he had a fight on his hands to keep his job. "I was reeling," he told one friend. To another ally, the doyen of political strategists

conceded: "This was a very big operation against me."

As Mr Mandelson continued his frantic round of media interviews on Tuesday morning, Mr Campbell told Westminster journalists that Mr Blair was standing by Mr Mandelson. Another Downing Street official told them: "You won't be getting any red meat."

Privately, though, an exhausted Mr Mandelson believed he was fighting a losing battle. He feared that yesterday morning's newspapers would be bad, and his media instincts, as usual, were right.

He telephoned Mr Blair at Chequers at 10pm on Tuesday,

confessing to a "misjudgement" in not telling his civil servants about the Robinson loan when he moved to the DTI. He said the affair was damaging the reputation of the Government and the Labour Party and, because of their close relationship, feared it would also damage Mr Blair.

Mindful of Mr Blair's promises to "clean up" politics after the years of "Tory sleaze", Mr Mandelson told him: "We can't be like the last lot."

He was also mindful of the way that Tory ministers facing allegations of personal or financial sleaze tried desperately to hang on to office, only to resign after prolonging the

'Dear Tony, I can't believe I am writing this letter'

This is the text of the letter sent by Peter Mandelson to the Prime Minister yesterday.

"Dear Tony, I can scarcely believe I am writing this letter to you. As well as being one of my closest friends you are a close colleague whose leadership and political qualities I value beyond all others."

"As you have, I have reflected overnight on the situation concerning the loan I took from Geoffrey Robinson and I have decided to resign from the Government."

"As I said publicly yesterday, I do not believe that I have done anything wrong or improper. But I should not, with all candour, have entered into the arrangement. I should, having done so, told you and other colleagues whose advice I value. And I should have told my permanent secretary on learning of the inquiry into Geoffrey Robinson, although I had entirely stood aside from this."

"I am sorry about this situation. But we came to power promising to uphold the highest possible standards in public life. We have not just to do

so, but we must be seen to do so."

"Therefore with huge regret I wish to resign. I am very proud of the role I played in helping you and previous leaders of the Labour Party to make our party electable and to win our historic victory last May. I am proud of the trust you placed in me both at the Cabinet office and at the DTI."

"In just 18 months you have helped to transform this country and the Government has made huge progress delivering on our manifesto and its programme of modernisation."

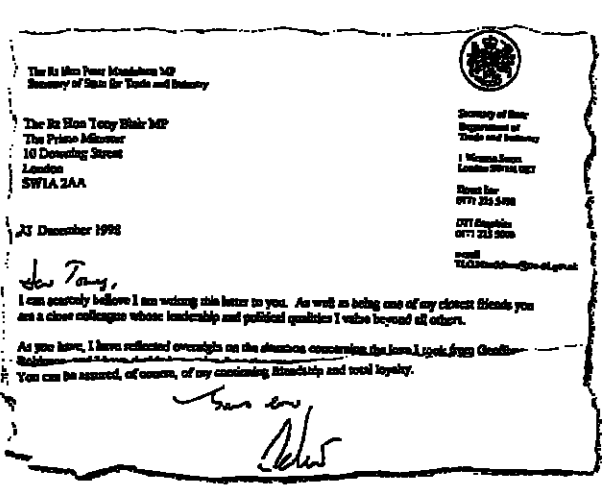
"I will always be a loyal Labour man and I am not prepared to see the party and the Government suffer the kind of attack this issue has provoked."

"You can be assured, of course, of my continuing friendship and total loyalty."

Yours ever, Peter."

This is the text of the Prime Minister's reply to Mr Mandelson's letter of resignation:

"Dear Peter, you will know better than anyone the feelings with which I write to you. You

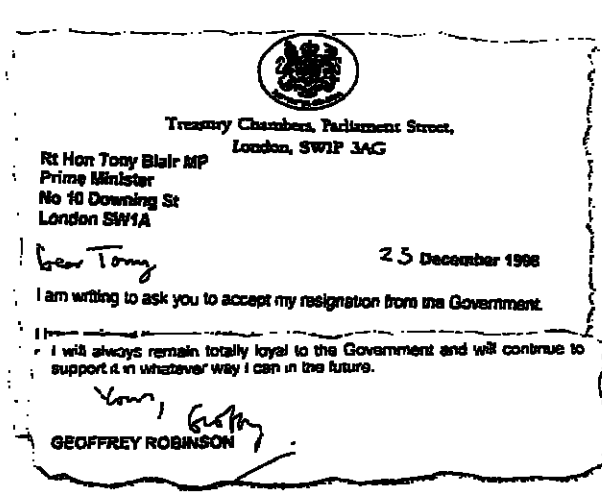


Peter Mandelson's letter of resignation ...

and I have been personal friends and the closest of political colleagues.

"It is no exaggeration to say that without your support and advice we would never have built New Labour."

"It was typical of you, when we spoke last night, that your thought was for the reputation of the Labour Party and the Government and that you be-



... Followed by Geoffrey Robinson's words of regret

lieved that since there had been a misjudgement on your part, then, as you said to me 'we can't be like the last lot' and that what we are trying to achieve for the country is more important than any individual."

"But I also want you to know that you have my profound thanks for all you have done and my belief that, in the future, you will achieve much, much more with us."

Yours ever, Tony."

This is the text of Geoffrey Robinson's resignation letter to the Prime Minister:

"Dear Tony, I am writing to ask you to accept my resignation from the Government."

"I have enjoyed the work of the last 18 months and have

Commons for oversights in the past concerning registration of interests."

"But although my affairs have been under full political and media scrutiny for more than a year, it is clear that I have not misused my position either as an MP or minister."

"I have done nothing wrong in any of these areas and I will vigorously defend myself against any allegations."

"In the case of the loan to Peter Mandelson, I merely considered myself in 1996 as someone in a position to help a long standing friend, with no request for anything in return."

"There comes a time when, after more than 12 months of a highly charged political campaign, the point has been reached when I feel that it is no longer right that you or your Government should be affected by or have to contend with these attacks."

"I will always remain totally loyal to the Government and will continue to support it in whatever way I can in the future."

Yours, Geoffrey."

This is the text of the letter from the Prime Minister to Geoffrey Robinson:

"Dear Geoffrey, thank you for your letter. I accept your decision with regret. I know that you have left these past months hounded by the campaign against you."

"I want you to know, however, that what I remember and thank you for is your immense contribution to the Government."

"The windfall tax which helped fund the New Deal for the unemployed; the reform of the corporate tax system; the saving of the coal industry; the agreement with the private sector to give the biggest boost to science we have ever given to Britain; the reintroduction of the Private Finance Initiative; for all your business sense and helpful advice, we thank you."

"You have performed the task of public servant with great dedication in circumstances of extraordinary difficulty. I look forward to working with you in the future."

Yours ever, Tony."

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From left: Peter Mandelson at the 1990 Labour conference in Blackpool; at Disney World, Florida, this year seeking ideas for the Millennium Dome; and with Tony Blair at a Dome photocall John Voos/Justin Sutcliffe/Sean Dempsey

A political triangle that fell apart

PETER MANDELSON may have moved from asset to liability in the last few days. But several of those close to Tony Blair were last night making little effort to pretend that his departure was other than a serious blow to the Prime Minister.

Full of internal tensions it may be but the modernising faction of the Cabinet is not so large that it can lose one of its three founder members, however controversial.

Mr Mandelson is a figure who generates so many myths that it is hard to separate the legend from reality. He was by no means the only architect of the Labour Party's modernisation. But he has, like Mao's comrades in 1949, a pretty special place in the history of the long march back to electability.

BY DONALD MACINTYRE

ty begun by Neil Kinnock when he became Labour leader in 1983.

Indeed if anyone should take the blame, or credit, for the rise of Peter Mandelson it is Neil Kinnock, who backed his appointment by the National Executive Committee as director of communications in 1985.

Mr Mandelson proved an invaluable ally to Mr Kinnock and others in the then Labour leader's heroic struggle to reverse the huge set-backs to the party's popularity inflicted by the surge of Bennism five years earlier.

Strange as it seems now, Tony Blair, and to a lesser extent Gordon Brown, were once, at least in one respect, Mr

Mandelson's protégés. Mr Blair, especially, was "trained up" by Mr Mandelson in the art of handling the media - a highly important skill for a man who would become the most media conscious of post-war Prime Ministers.

Each of them, as Mr Mandelson started to see as early as the 1987 election, were not only the most talented politicians of their generation but were also developing a far-reaching vision for how Labour could once again become the natural party of government.

In policy terms, Mr Mandelson was nowhere near as inventive as either Mr Brown and Mr Blair. But his consistency as a Labour Party revisionist and his signal expertise in devising a media "line to take" on any

THE RISE TO INFLUENCE

particular issue, his ability to compress it into a soundbite which would lodge in the public mind, and his knowledge of which journalists would be most receptive to which message, were all invaluable assets to his more senior colleagues.

From 1988 to 1990 and again from 1992 to 94 the men increasingly worked together until they were acting as an almost inseparable trio.

The traumatic period of uncertainty over whether Mr Brown or Mr Blair would run as leader in the wake of John Smith's death famously sowed the seeds of the enmity between Mr Brown and Mr Mandelson, who became convinced that of

his two moderniser friends it was Mr Blair who looked the likely winner.

But while one side of one of the most remarkable triangles in British politics was fractured, the other two sides - between Mr Brown and Mr Blair and between Mr Mandelson and Mr Blair - remained intact.

Mr Blair regarded Mr Mandelson as too controversial a figure within the Labour Party to make him an open member of his leadership campaign team. But as "Bobby" he performed a clandestine and central role in the campaign, giving his usual mixture of media, tactical and strategic advice. And he continued to do so, along with

Gordon Brown, up to and including the general election.

While Mr Brown was in overall charge of the campaign and its strategy, Mr Mandelson had spent the best part of two years planning its mechanics while continuing, along with the then Shadow Chancellor, to give a stream of political advice. And with the help of Philip Gould, the man he brought in to provide research, after he was appointed director of communications in 1985, Mr Mandelson also gave polling advice.

It seemed baffling to many in a party which took the best part of a decade to shake off its deep suspicion of, and hostility towards, the press that someone whose initial skills and experience were in media relations should come to assume such

importance. But that overlooks two important points. One is the nature of oppositions, for whom the media is virtually the only weapon, apart from parliament, at their disposal. And the second is, as Mr Mandelson had been one of the first prominent Labour figures to realise, the Marshall McLuhan-esque truth that in modern politics it is impossible to separate the medium from the message. Just as the good salesman whose product is thought to be unsafe, or useless, goes back to his bosses and tells them to change the product, so the political media man begins to exercise and influence in policy.

This helps to explain not only Mr Mandelson's role, but the steadily increasing importance of his old friend Alastair

Campbell in the Prime Minister's inner counsels. Mr Mandelson provided not only advice, but in the notoriously friendless world of high politics, friendship. Last but not least, he was a lightning conductor. As the leadership's most unpopular figure he was able to draw down its enemies and take the heat by being its public defender when it got into trouble. And in all this Mr Mandelson had a revisionist clarity which dated at least from his time as a Lambeth councillor in the early 1980s.

Mr Mandelson has never been short of faults but inconsistency hasn't been one of them. There will no doubt be jubilation in many quarters of the Labour Party this Christmas. But not in Ten Downing Street.

The millionaire businessman who wanted to help

GEOFFREY ROBINSON gave up his hold on Treasury office after surviving months of speculation and controversy about his business background.

It was finally an act of generosity that brought him down, and Downing Street was quick to absolve the millionaire businessman from blame. "Geoffrey is not a leper," the Prime Minister's official spokesman said. "He has been a Labour member of Parliament for a very long time and he is somebody who is very generous."

However, it was the continuing questioning of Mr Robinson's business links and his secret funding of Gordon Brown's private office in opposition that made his resignation inevitable.

Disclosures are still emerging of the undisclosed sums he gave to the Smith Political Economy Unit, created after the

BY COLIN BROWN
Chief Political Correspondent

death of the party leader John Smith, to give support to Mr Brown as Shadow Chancellor before the 1997 general election.

Mr Robinson's penthouse in Park Lane, central London, has regularly been used by the Chancellor and his advisers, Ed Balls and Charlie Whelan, for planning meetings and watching football on television, with the support of room service from the Grosvenor Park hotel.

The "charges" against Mr Robinson include:

■ The Department of Trade and Industry inquiry into allegations of possible accounting offences by Hollis Industries plc, a Maxwell company of which Mr Robinson was chairman. The accounts showed the chairman receiving £200,000 in re-

muneration which he denied ever receiving.

■ The Committee on Standards and Privileges which said, in a report in January, that his interest in the Orion Trust "would have been better registered" although he was cleared of breaching the rules of the House.

■ On 18 November, the committee found he had broken the rules of the House by failing to register his shareholding in Stenbell Ltd, through which he paid staff salaries at the *New Statesman*. He was censured and forced to make a personal apology in the Commons.

■ And the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards has been asked to investigate his failure to register his business relationship with Robert Maxwell between 1987 and 1991.

Born in Sheffield, the son of

ROBINSON'S DEFENCE



Mr Robinson and his wife, Marie-Elena

a furniture manufacturer. Mr Robinson was managing director of Jaguar Cars by the age of 33, before winning his seat for Coventry North West in 1976.

He made his millions from TransTec, a Midlands company he founded specialising in the transfer of ideas from university to the shopfloor.

During his time at Jaguar, he met Josée Bourgeois, a Belgian millionaire who gave him the backing that enabled him to found TransTec. After her death aged 81, she left him another fortune, which he placed in an offshore trust.

His growing wealth made enemies in the Labour Party and he fought off a Bennite attempt to oust him from his seat. With the collapse of the left, the Blairites saw his value. He was appointed Paymaster-General in May, last year, to spearhead the drive to bring private finance into public schemes. He refused to draw his ministerial salary. "He was a bit naive, and like a fish out of water in politics," said a minister. "But he didn't draw a salary. He didn't need all this aggro. He just did it because he wanted to make contribution."

The Tories - stung by the "sleaze" allegations against them - scrutinised his business dealings and found a number of examples where he had failed to make proper or full disclosures to the House. They found he had offshore holdings worth an estimated £30m.

The writing was on the wall for Mr Robinson when Mr Blair decided against using his sumptuous Tuscan villa last summer for his family holiday, having enjoyed its attractions the previous year. "It marked the card for Geoffrey," said a ministerial source. "He was very put out and puzzled but he recognised he was drawing too much flak and Blair was distancing himself."

The Prime Minister's instinct was to drop Mr Robinson from the Government in his July reshuffle and replace him with Geoff Hoon, the Lord

Chancellor's spokesman in the Commons, but Mr Brown fought to keep Mr Robinson in his Treasury team.

The Chancellor and the multi-millionaire had become firm friends. He was appointed to the Treasury team to bring a business vitality to the Blair government.

Mr Robinson's business insight brought him some surprising allies within the Cabinet. One of his strongest supporters was John Prescott, the deputy Prime Minister, who privately found his knowledge of business invaluable in dealing with the private sector to finance public transport schemes.

"He came up with new ideas and if John came up with ideas, he would not reject them. He would say, 'Let's talk about it', and find a way of making them work," said a Whitehall source.

The rise of Blairites with modern ideas

THE CABINET RESHUFFLE

TONY BLAIR reaffirmed his authority over his Cabinet yesterday with the promotion of the moderniser, Stephen Byers, to the post of Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

It was a clear signal that the Prime Minister wants Mr Byers to continue with the policy direction taken by Peter Mandelson over the semi-privatisation of the Post Office and trade union recognition.

Mr Mandelson angered Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, by refusing to fully privatise the Post Office, opting instead for greater commercial freedom within the public sector.

Geoffrey Robinson is expected to be replaced as Paymaster General by Geoff Hoon, Lord Irvine's ministerial spokesman in the House of Commons. The Lord Chancellor was said to be resisting the pressure to allow his junior minister to be moved by Mr Blair, but was expected to be overruled.

Mr Hoon, a well-liked min-

BY COLIN BROWN AND
PAUL WAUGH

ister and a lawyer, was pencilled in for the post last July, but was kept in his position as Commons spokesman for the Lord Chancellor's department after a successful rear-guard action by Mr Brown to stop Mr Robinson being sacked. "There are few people who can get on with Lord Irvine like Geoff Hoon, and he doesn't want to lose him, but it looks like he will be overruled," said a Whitehall source.

Alan Milburn, the Minister of State for Health, was promoted into the Cabinet by Mr Blair to replace Mr Byers as Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

Mr Milburn, 40, is regarded as hard-headed and a Brown supporter - which may have cost him the Cabinet promotion last July - but he regards himself as much a moderniser as Mr Byers, who is a close friend.

There was speculation last night in Whitehall that Mr Blair

will replace Mr Milburn as health minister with John Denham, the minister of social security, a Blairite who did much of the spade work on the reform of pensions before Frank Field resigned last July from the task of "thinking the unthinkable". Since then, Mr Denham has won his spurs as the number two to Alistair Darling, the Social Security Secretary.

Mr Milburn will be able to mark a double celebration tomorrow. Christmas Day is also the second birthday of his second son, Danny. He has another son, Joe, aged seven, with his partner, Ruth Briel. Mr Milburn takes his parental responsibilities seriously. He has been seen pushing a pram to his office and at party conferences.

He stayed up all night writing the White Paper on health reforms to be introduced in April, and the only way he could stay awake was to play rap and soul music, loudly, in his office, causing a few raised eyebrows.



Stephen Byers (left), the new Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and Alan Milburn, the new Chief Secretary to the Treasury

Mr Milburn is expected to give his successor a hard grilling over the finances at the Department of Health. "He thought he was over-generous towards the GPs," said a friend last night. Mr Milburn made his mark as shrewd questioner on the Public Accounts Committee after winning his Darlington seat in 1992 and his skills at probing public finances will be well used in the Treasury.

The promotion of Mr Byers to the DTI was the latest stage in a political career that can justly be described as "meteoric", making him tipped as a future leadership candidate.

The MP for Tyneside North reached the Cabinet this summer, just six years after entering Parliament, to become Chief Secretary to the Treasury. A former law lecturer and leader of North Tyneside Coun-

cil, his grasp of policy, media savvy and ability to rise effortlessly without making too many enemies has led some to compare him with Mr Blair.

He has inherited a controversial compromise over trade union recognition. Mr Mandelson upset the unions, who fear the forthcoming Fairness at Work Bill due in January and with the new opportunities for social partnership," a statement said.

Despite his Blairite credentials, the 45-year-old MP can, and frequently does, claim that his background proves that he is not some Millbank clone obsessed with the metropolis. His first taste of politics came in the North East, where he was one of the "young bloods" who fought off both right-wingers and militants to lead North Tyneside council. "That put steel in my back-bone," he said later.

Crucial questions remain over loan

BY ANDREW VERITY

CRUCIAL QUESTIONS remain over whether Peter Mandelson correctly declared the £373,000 loan from Geoffrey Robinson when he applied for a mortgage for his Notting Hill home.

Mortgage experts also suggested yesterday that a loan without regular interest repayments, as Mr Robinson had agreed with the former trade secretary, would normally be considered a "gift".

Under the normal procedures of the Britannia Building Society, which granted the mortgage, Mr Mandelson was required to sign a declaration

stating he had not arranged any other loan, second mortgage or improvement grant in connection with the property in Northumberland Place.

He was also required to certify that all the details he had given on Britannia's mortgage application form were correct. Mr Mandelson has said he could not recall whether he declared the loan when he applied to borrow £150,000 in late 1996. Britannia Building Society said it was legally barred from answering questions on his application because of the Data Protection Act.

Mortgage lenders usually insist on being told of any out-

MORTGAGE MYSTERY

standing loans held by a borrower, to let them assess the risk that the mortgage applicant will become unable to keep up repayments.

A spokesman for Britannia said: "Anyone who applies for a loan with Britannia is required to give us details of all their financial commitments. We always need to establish whether or not a customer is fully able to repay."

When a mortgage represents only a small fraction of a property's value, lenders also expect to be informed of how

the borrower is funding the rest of the purchase. While gifts from relatives are accepted, commercial loans are frowned upon.

Building societies will occasionally waive some of their normal lending criteria to VIPs, but will still carry out certain vital checks.

Failure to disclose a substantial second loan, secured against the same property, would trigger immediate concern, because it would prevent the lender forcing a sale should the borrower default.

In his letter to Elizabeth Filkin, the new parliamentary commissioner for standards, Mr Mandelson claimed his loan from Mr Robinson was not a gift, in spite of Mr Robinson's agreement not to demand regular interest payments.

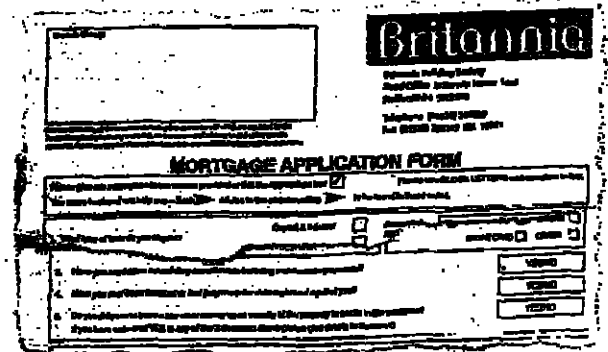
Mr Mandelson said the agreement was that part of the loan would be repaid by the sale of his former property. The remainder was to be repaid upon the sale of the house in Northumberland Place.

According to mortgage experts, loans would normally be considered a "gift" if the lender had waived the right to regular repayments, as Mr

Robinson had. Under Mr Mandelson's arrangement, interest owed to Mr Robinson, at the Midland Bank base rate of 6.25 per cent, would not be repaid but added to the value of the loan. By now, the loan amount has risen to more than £430,000. By 2006 Mr Mandelson would owe Mr Robinson £683,908.

Mr Mandelson said Mr Robinson would also be at liberty to register a charge over the property, giving him the right to force a sale if the former minister defaulted.

A search of the Land Registry for the property in Northumberland Place confirms Mr Robinson has not



Did Peter Mandelson abide by Britannia's rules?

exercised his right to register a charge on the property. The only charge is for the

mortgage from the Britannia Building Society, placed on the property in November 1996.



Peter Mandelson at the Dome. He wanted to mastermind a national festival, as his grandfather Herbert Morrison had done in 1951

Dream of following grandfather ends

MILLENNIUM DOME

BY KATE WATSON-SMYTH

UNTIL YESTERDAY, when people talked of Mandelson's folly they were referring to the Millennium Dome.

Now that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has resigned, the "tacky theme park" and "white elephant" has lost its most passionate supporter.

Peter Mandelson cast himself as the saviour of the Dome. Like his grandfather Herbert Morrison, who master-minded the 1951 Festival of Britain while carrying out his duties as Clement Attlee's Foreign Secretary, Mr Mandelson wanted to prove that he too could organise a national extravaganza.

His political opponents felt his position conflicted with his duties as Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

The Dome will now be overseen by Chris Smith, the Secretary of State for Culture, until a replacement can be found. Stephen Bayley, the former creative director of the Dome, who resigned this year over political interference in the project and a fall-out with Mr Mandelson, said: "It does amuse me hugely that the year began with my resignation and ends with his. I don't want to appear to be gloating but..."

But Peter Ainsworth, the Conservative spokesman on culture said: "The news that Peter Mandelson has relinquished his responsibility for the Millennium Dome is the best Christmas present the New Millennium Experience Company could have had."

Mr Mandelson's role in the Dome was as the holder of the Government's single share in the New Millennium Experience Company (NMEC) which organises the project in Greenwich, south London. But his departure raises serious questions over the ability of the NMEC to raise the millions from private business needed to make the project work. It is also more questionable that the Dome will be ready on time.

Mr Mandelson always maintained he saw no conflict between his political and his Dome roles. The assurance came because he was aware British Airways was one of the sponsors of the Dome and that the Department of Trade and Industry was one of the bodies due to rule on the possible threat to competitiveness of BA's proposed link-up with American Airlines.

The NMEC, however, insisted Mr Mandelson was not involved in negotiating or procuring sponsorship contracts for the Dome. "All contracts were handled by the NMEC in-house sponsorship team," the company said last night.

Whether Mr Mandelson attends the celebrations remains to be seen. He has said the Dome will be a chance to "reflect on the pride we have in our past and the confidence we have in our future". Unfortunately for him, it may simply provide a chance to reflect on his downfall.

It's a loss for us, too, say the voters of Hartlepool

THE CONSTITUENCY

BY DARIUS SANAI

THERE HAS always been an irony in Peter Mandelson's choice of parliamentary seat. Since his election to Parliament in 1992, Labour's ultimate moderniser has represented a depressed north-eastern town whose image is the epitome of the traditional Labour Party.

But while there is no greater enmity than between two sides of the same political party, there was no dancing on the streets of Hartlepool yesterday.

The consensus was that while Mr Mandelson appeared to be the victim of arrogance, the resignation of the local MP from such a powerful position could only be a loss for the town.

Philip Ash, 47, a bus driver, said: "It's a shame. He has done a good job for Hartlepool. I think his resignation is just to please everyone else, there was a lot of pressure on him to quit and it will please the Opposition as he is the strength of the party."

The enmity between old and



Mandelson's other home attracts interest North News

new Labour should in theory be simmering in Hartlepool, but many traditional supporters have been converted by Mr Mandelson's devotion to constituency matters. "Despite being one of the busiest figures in government he doesn't neglect his constituents," said Peter Barron, editor of the Hartlepool Mail. "He has done very well as an MP. He is still

very visible in the town despite all his other commitments."

But Mr Barron felt Mr Mandelson was right to resign. "He was in a position where he had no choice. I just can't believe he could have been so naive."

"There will be mixed feelings about the resignation, but this is a traditional working class northern town and the whole concept of a loan... as large as

that for a Labour MP will be so alien to the people of Hartlepool that most will think [resignation] was the right thing to do."

The ambivalence in the reaction towards Mr Mandelson has deeper roots than Labour Party factionalism. Hartlepool, once a byword for post-industrial desolation, has undergone something of an economic recovery of late. As Stephen McCormack, 28, a factory worker, said yesterday: "I thought he should have stuck it out. He has done a lot for Hartlepool."

However, the positive views are not unanimous. Melanie Sonnick, 22, a shop assistant in the town, said: "All he has done for Hartlepool is bring us bad publicity."

Though it will be little consolation to the fallen minister, whose preferred constituency encompasses the cappuccino cooves of Notting Hill, it is the ultimate irony that his prompt resignation may actually boost his standing in a town where old Labour values die hard.

Headlines helped downfall

PRESS REACTION

A CAREER of manipulating the media to his advantage came to naught yesterday as newspapers united in their condemnation of Peter Mandelson.

Downing Street's decision to accept his resignation yesterday morning was influenced by the vitriol poured on the minister and the Government by the morning's newspapers.

The Daily Mail led the attack, with a front page that screamed "Master of Deception". Its leader likened the minister to Icarus, a man brought down by his soaring pride. It condemned government "cronyism" and raised the spectre of Robert Maxwell and his links not just with

BY PAUL MCCANN
Media Editor

Geoffrey Robinson, but with other Labour heavyweights.

Even the Labour-supporting Mirror weighed in, describing Mandelson's *folie de grandeur*. "The Government underestimated how it would impact on the public," said editor Piers Morgan yesterday. "They were hoping because he did nothing illegal he would get away with it. The press realised how such a large sum would disgust the public." Under the headline "A crisis of arrogance and greed", *The Mirror* also attacked cronyism.

The Express led with the

headline "How he hid the truth", and accused Mr Mandelson of offering only "token regrets". In *The Times* he was compared to Becky Sharp from the novel *Vanity Fair*: both have a "flair" of wanting to "lead the high life on virtually no money".

The *Guardian* stopped short of calling for Mr Mandelson's resignation, but lamented his poor judgement and reported on the private "glee" of many Labour MPs at his discomfort.

Certain elements recurred in yesterday's coverage. Almost all papers traced Mandelson's rise from a humble cottage to his recent status as king of Nineties cool. The other device

no one could resist was comparing his Notting Hill home with those of his constituents. *The Mail* claimed he could have bought nine houses in Hartlepool with the borrowed money. *The Mirror* said it was 30. *The Telegraph* said it was 36 and *The Sun* said he could have bought a whole street.

The *Sun*'s front page combined two quotes from Tony Blair speeches: "We are on the side of ordinary people against privilege. We must be purer than pure." If that was so, asked *The Sun*, "how the hell can Mandy stay?" It seems that after seeing yesterday's front pages, Tony Blair asked the same question.

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Mickey eclipsed by Disney's own Pooh

"MERRY CHRISTMAS, Pooh!" said Christopher Robin.

"You've been such a generous bear, such a kind bear, you deserve pots and pots of honey!"

"Oh, thank you!" exclaimed Pooh as he helped himself to a smackerel. "Mum," he said, licking his lips. "What a very sweet Christmas this is!"

And so the world's favourite cuddly bear heralds the festive season, surrounded by all his friends from the Hundred Acre Wood. There is snow outside, and Pooh is wearing a Santa hat and scarf. It doesn't sound much like A A Milne. But that's because it isn't A A Milne, except by the vaguest of associations. This is Disney Pooh, a revamped version of the original Bear of Very Little Brain as conceived for the multimedia age, and - to judge by his performance in shopping malls across the United States - a monstrously successful marketing exercise.

Ann Braybrook's seasonal book *The Sweetest Christmas*, based on the Pooh stories by A A Milne, is just one of a slew of spin-offs flying out of the shops and into toddlers' bedrooms this year. At every turn parents are confronted with Pooh books, Pooh videos, Pooh clothing, Pooh satchels and school bags, Pooh sheets, Pooh toothbrush holders and Pooh soap dispensers.

According to Disney, Pooh is bigger than any of its spin-offs from *A Bug's Life* or *Ty Story* or *The Lion King*. He's even bigger than Mickey Mouse. Winnie the Pooh is currently

BY ANDREW GUMBEL
in Los Angeles



the number two licensed toy line in America, with only Barbie pipping him to the post.

"Pooh belongs to everybody," says John Singh of Disney's consumer products division in an attempt to explain a phenomenon that has sky-rocketed in just two short years. Mostly his success is a reflection of Disney's extraordinary marketing muscle and an assiduous corporate courtship that stretches back more than half a century.

As early as the Forties, Walt Disney entered tortuous negotiations for the rights to the Pooh menagerie, dealing with both A A Milne's estate and Dutton Publishing, which issued the books in America.

When a deal was eventually struck in 1964, Disney trod carefully giving up on the idea of a full-length feature and opting instead for a series of short films that adhered

closely to the original stories.

From the outset, however, E H Shepard's illustrations were redrawn as Walt Disney decided, in quintessential Hollywood fashion, that Winnie the Pooh didn't look enough like Winnie the Pooh. No longer Christopher Robin's raggedy bed companion, Pooh became a smiling Californian sort of bear with fur as golden as the honey he so loved to eat.

In time, as Disney invented whole new plotlines to put Pooh on TV, he developed a very West Coast psychotable sensibility, which involved lots of hugging and affirmations of friendship. He also acquired a skimpy bright red T-shirt that on one less chubby than he might have been accused of looking downright sexy.

For 30 years, Disney subcontracted the merchandising of Pooh to Sears Roebuck but that all changed in 1996.

Disney had developed into a world-class entertainment conglomerate with access to television stations, shops and a string of toy-making contractors kept busy by its never-ending series of big screen hits. It took over the merchandising itself and the Pooh machine went into overdrive.

In deference to parents with memories of the original stories, Disney has put out a line of toys called Classic Pooh, which more closely resemble the E H Shepard originals, but to most American kids Winnie the Pooh is Disney Pooh and they wouldn't want him any other way.



Pooh and friends in the Disney cartoons which portray Pooh as a golden, California-style bear, a far cry from E H Shepard's original drawings (top left)

Fury over parole for IRA prisoners

A WOMAN whose parents were killed in a notorious IRA bombing chained herself to a gate at the Maze prison near Belfast yesterday in protest against the release of republican prisoners for Christmas.

Those who were given 10-day parole yesterday included Sean Kelly, the IRA prisoner whose bomb killed both Michelle Williamson's parents. Kelly slipped away, avoiding Ms Williamson, who later said: "Kelly is an even bigger murdering coward than I thought he was."

The incident illustrated the sensitivity over prisoner releases, which form part of the Good Friday Agreement. More than 200 permanent releases have already taken place under the agreement.

Yesterday it was the usual Christmas parades. Those released were associated with some of the most notorious incidents and darkest days of violence of the Troubles.

Sean Kelly, for example, was himself almost killed in the Shankill Road fish shop attack in 1993, when an IRA bomb detonated prematurely, killing a colleague and nine Protestant civilians. Other IRA prisoners on parole include Patrick Magee - or the "Brighton bomber" - who was jailed for the 1984 bomb in the Grand Hotel which killed five people attending the Conservative Party's annual conference.

On the loyalist side, those who will spend Christmas at home include Michael Stone, the Ulster Defence Association gunman who killed three people attending a republican funeral in Belfast in 1988, and Johnny "Mad Dog" Adair, who was regarded as the head of the UDA's assassination

BY DAVID MCKITTRICK
Ireland Correspondent

squads, was the IRA's target in the Shankill Road bombing.

Under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement, all prisoners affiliated to the major paramilitary groups can expect permanent release by mid-2000. While technically they can be recalled to prison at any time, this is considered unlikely except if there is a return to wholesale violence or if they are seen to become involved again in terrorist activity.

Unionist critics of the agreement, together with the Conservative Party, have called for a halt to releases unless the IRA begins to decommission weapons. The Government's position, however, is that the releases were specified in the agreement and have since been endorsed in the referendum.

The Northern Ireland Secretary, Mo Mowlam, said yesterday: "It's not easy to go through the kind of changes that are taking place as a result of the agreement. The accelerated release of prisoners is tough, not just for those with families or friends who have been murdered, but I think it's bitter for everybody, a bitter pill to swallow."

Opposition to the releases has also come from police representatives on both sides of the border. In the republic, four men convicted of killing members of the Garda have been freed - under protest.

As part of the conditions for releases in the north, all prisoners must not make any public comment, appear at any demonstration or involve themselves in any sort of behaviour which could cause distress to victims or victims' relatives.

No charges for Bridgewater Four police

SEVEN POLICE officers who were alleged to have fabricated evidence that led to the false conviction of the Bridgewater Four are not to be charged by the Crown Prosecution Service.

Solicitors for the Four said yesterday's announcement by the CPS "beggared belief" and even David Calvert-Smith, the new Director of Public Prosecutions, said he appreciated the decision could be seen as "difficult to understand".

Ann Whelan, the mother of Michael Hickey, one of those wrongly convicted, said the CPS action was "horrendous, outrageous, and deplorable". She vowed to fight on.

Supporters of the wrongly convicted men had expected police officers to face charges after the Court of Appeal raised "grave concerns" last year over the police investigation.

Michael Hickey, Vincent Hickey and Jim Robinson were freed by the court after spending 17 years in prison. Pat Molloy, the fourth man convicted of murdering the newspaper boy Carl Bridgewater, died in prison in 1981.

Eight detectives - one of

BY IAN BURRELL
Home Affairs Correspondent

whom has since died - were implicated in the Court of Appeal ruling delivered in July last year over the way Staffordshire Police gathered evidence in the case.

But Mr Calvert-Smith said there was no realistic prospect of convicting the officers. He pointed out the Court of Appeal had access to material that would not be admissible in a criminal trial.

Allegations focused on claims that Pat Molloy confessed to being at the scene of the crime only after being shown records of a forged interview with co-defendant Vincent Hickey.

James Nichol, the solicitor representing all three freed men, said there was clear evidence against at least two of the officers who had signed statements denying a false interview report had been drawn up concerning Michael Hickey, a fact contradicted by scientific tests proving the existence of the report and which formed the plank of the appeal case.

IN BRIEF

Britons die in Bosnia air crash

TWO BRITISH servicemen were killed on Tuesday when their helicopter crashed in flames near their base in Bosnia, the Ministry of Defence said yesterday. A third crewman was seriously ill in hospital after the Lynx crashed at Gornji Vakuf, 40 miles west of Sarajevo.

Rushdie flight ban lifted

BRITISH AIRWAYS has lifted its nine-year ban on the author Salman Rushdie flying with the airline after receiving assurances from the Foreign Office. The ban was imposed on security grounds when Iran issued a death sentence in response to *The Satanic Verses*.

Branson balloon heads for Pacific

AFTER LEAVING Chinese airspace, Richard Branson's round-the-world balloon attempt was last night facing a new challenge - crossing the Pacific Ocean. One of his two co-pilots, Steve Fossett, was forced to ditch in the ocean this summer during a separate global ballooning attempt.

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Suppliers call for fluoride in water

FLUORIDATION OF Britain's water supplies moved closer yesterday, as the water industry called for a change in the law to hand over the decision to health authorities.

Water UK, which represents the country's water utility companies, delighted campaigners and medical bodies by suggesting the decision on whether to add fluoride should no longer be made by the water firms and instead be taken on medical, not commercial grounds, after public consultation.

Such a move would almost certainly increase the number of people drinking fluoridated water, which has been shown to cut the incidence of tooth decay. About 10 per cent of the population, 5.5 million people, currently have fluoride added to their water, mainly in the West Midlands and the North East.

Fluoride occurs naturally in all water supplies and in some places, such as Hartlepool, the level is high enough to provide protection. In other areas, where the natural level has been topped up artificially, decay rates have fallen.

Over the past decade, 55 requests have been made by health authorities to water companies to add fluoride but all have been turned down due to fears of legal action by anti-fluoride groups, who have claimed that fluoridation amounts to mass medication and is in breach of civil liberties.

Last week a judicial review ruled that Northumbrian Water had the right to refuse to extend fluoridation of its supplies under current legislation. The Government indicated its backing for fluoridation in a Green Paper on public health in February, which is to be followed by a White Paper in the new year.

BY JEREMY LAURANCE
Health Editor

Last month, the Acheson report into health inequalities, commissioned by the Government, also called for wider fluoridation. Yesterday, Pamela Taylor, chief executive of Water UK, said the law was a "mess" and reform was overdue.

The 1985 Water Fluoridation Act left responsibility with the water companies. That should be switched to health authorities, who should be required to carry out full public consultation, she said.

She said she had written to Tessa Jowell, the Health minister, seeking an urgent meeting in the new year. "The next step rests with the Government," she said.

The proposal was welcomed by the British Medical Association and the NHS Confederation. Sheila Jones of the National Alliance against Dental Health Inequalities, representing 31 medical, dental and voluntary organisations, said: "The water companies are facing up to the reality that this Government is not going to put up with the industry in the way the previous one did."

"They have seen the writing is on the wall."

Opponents warned that fluoridation can cause discolouration of tooth enamel and have long-term consequences for health. John Graham of the National Pure Water Association said: "I think Water UK will effectively be facilitating the aims of the pro-fluoride lobby in government."

He added: "What we want is an independent public inquiry into the effects of fluoride in tap water. No one has anything to fear from that."



Doreen Taylor, 66, and her mother, Emily Hayward, 97. When she is not caring for her mother, Mrs Taylor helps Age Concern

'A smile is the only reward I need'

BY KATE WATSON-SMYTH

AT THE age of 66, Doreen Taylor should be enjoying her retirement and allowing others to look after her. Instead, she spends her time looking after her mother and running a day centre for the elderly.

Mrs Taylor is the warden at the Friends Meeting House in Wolverhampton and, in any spare time, works as a volunteer for Age Concern.

"It takes up all my time but I really enjoy it," she said. "I have never thought of money as the most important thing and the joy on the old people's faces when they come to the day centre or I take them out for lunch is compensation in itself."

Every day at 7.30am she drives to her mother's house, prepares breakfast and dresses her. "It used to be quite quick



to do, but now she is 97 and I am usually there until about 10am," she said.

On Tuesdays she goes home via the market, where she buys food for lunch at the day centre, which opens every Wednesday. "We have about 24 people in each week and it is the highlight of their week, because many of them aren't very mobile. I have another volunteer to help and we make them lunch or sometimes take them out in the Age

Concern ambulance to the country or to the pub for lunch."

At 3.30pm, when the centre closes, Mrs Taylor cleans up and folds the tables before going home and making tea for herself and her husband, Dennis, 67. Then she returns to her mother's house to give her supper and get her ready for bed. "She stays with me three days a week, which makes things easier, but she is very attached to her little flat and I am determined she will be able to stay there as long as she wants."

"I don't mind looking after her. She did so much for us as children and it seems only right that I should try and repay some of that."

"I like to be busy and I shall keep on doing this as long as I can. I feel proud I can do something to help these people and that's all the reward I need."

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Longer life for childless women

BY STEVE CONNOR
Science Editor

PEOPLE WHO are genetically destined to live a long life are also more likely to have fewer children, according to a study of 33,000 European aristocrats.

Scientists who analysed the longevity and family size of aristocrats born between 1740 and 1875 have discovered evidence to suggest that those who lived longer did so because their bodies were less suited to rearing offspring.

The findings fit in with a theory of Darwinian survival, which says that some animals are genetically programmed to die young and have many offspring whereas others are less fertile and so live longer.

Rudi Westendorp, of Leiden University in the Netherlands, and Tom Kirkwood, of the University of Manchester, obtained the records of 19,830 male and 13,667 female aristocrats to compare life spans against the ages when they had children, in addition to family size.

Professor Kirkwood, a biological gerontologist, was testing his "disposable soma theory", which predicts that any investment the body - or soma - makes in ensuring fertility and reproduction is diverted away from repairing the continual damage caused by the ageing process. This "trade off" has already been established by experiments on fruitflies, which show that individual animals who are genetically programmed to have a long life are less fertile than those destined to die young.

The scientists found a clear correlation between extended longevity and small family size. Almost half the women who surpassed 81 had no children, yet fewer than one-third who died before this age were childless, they report in the journal *Nature*.

"We are not saying those people who choose to have fewer children are more likely to live longer," Professor Kirkwood said. "It is not conscious, but a biological trade-off between having offspring and living longer."

Bedsit rapist becomes subject of first legal exclusion order

A RAPIST released from jail has been banned from visiting parts of Manchester and all the city's universities at night after police yesterday obtained the first "curfew order" to come from a British court.

The ruling by Alan Berg, a Manchester stipendiary magistrate, restricts the move-

BY JASON BENNETTO
Crime Correspondent

ments of Michael Gordon, 35, known as the Bedsit Beast after he raped two students at knifepoint. He was jailed for 12 years in 1990 for attacks on the women, aged 20 and 25, after breaking into their bedsits

while they slept. He had prowled the area at night to select his targets.

Police told the court yesterday that they had seen Gordon recently looking into windows and wandering the streets in the area where he committed the attacks. They believed he was searching for a new victim.

The court ruled that Gordon still posed a risk and made him the subject of a Sex Offenders Order, under legislation that came into force at the beginning of this month.

The civil order, which runs for eight years, bans Gordon from much of the southern part of the city between 10pm

and 7am, excepting his home in the Rusholme area, which is inside the "exclusion zone". It also bans him from the premises and grounds of Manchester's three universities. A breach of the order could lead to a maximum five-year jail term.

He returned to the area in March after being released

from a bail hostel to which he was sent after serving eight years of his jail sentence.

Officers told the court they had seen Gordon peering through bedsit windows at night and then running away shoeless on tip-toe.

When he was arrested he had a sexually explicit audio

tape with him, which appeared to have been made during an encounter with prostitutes.

Detective Sergeant Chris Lowe, who helped to jail Gordon in 1988, told the court: "I am under no doubt whatsoever that Mr Gordon is using peeping activities to target victims."

Gordon's probation officer,

Penny Jones, described him as "cool and calculating".

Mr Berg said: "I have no hesitation in concluding an order is necessary in protecting the public from serious harm from him."

Wayne Jackson, representing Gordon, said an appeal would be lodged immediately.

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Israelis hit by revenge blitz

THOUSANDS OF residents of northern Israel were spending a second night in bomb shelters last night, after Katyusha rockets fired from southern Lebanon rained down on their homes, wounding 13 civilians.

Hizbollah, the Islamic Shia "Party of God" militia, was retaliating yesterday for an Israeli air strike on Tuesday, which killed a Lebanese woman and her six children in the Bekaa valley of eastern Lebanon. Israel apologised for the bombing, blaming the tragedy on technical malfunction or pilot error. The crew, it said, was aiming at a radio transmitter 300 yards away from the woman's home.

Hizbollah, which has been waging a hit-and-run war of attrition since 1985 with Israeli troops occupying a self-proclaimed "security zone" inside Lebanon, was not appeased.

"Once again," it said after yesterday's rocketing, "the

BY ERIC SILVER
in Jerusalem

resistance has fulfilled its promise to protect our territory and our civilians.

"Violence must be answered by violence. Their blood must be spilt for ours."

According to Reuters, 28 civilians have now been killed in the confrontation this year, almost all of them Lebanese. The guerrillas lost 37 fighters and Israel 20 soldiers in the same period.

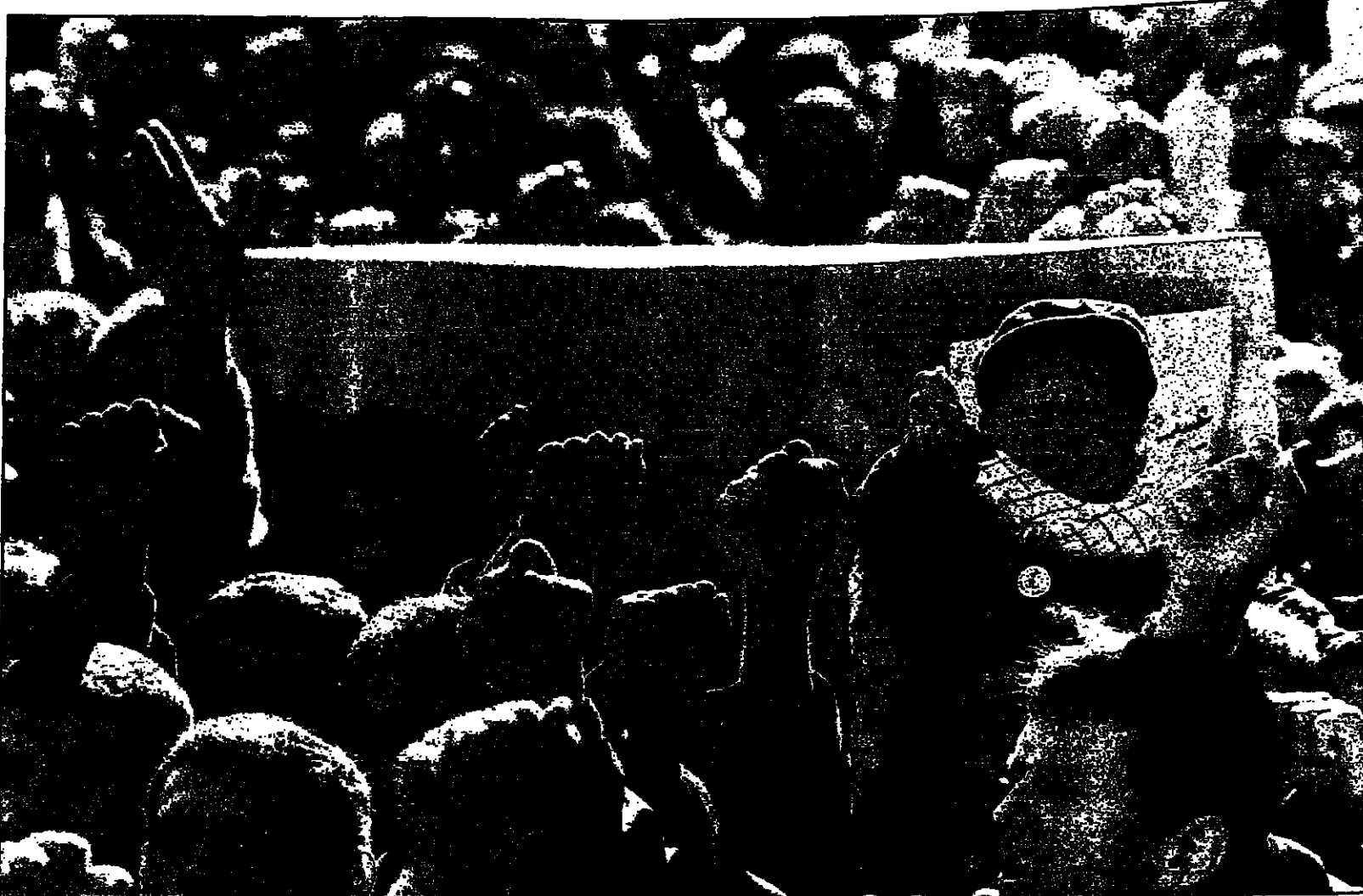
The Katyusha surface-to-surface rockets wrecked a bank and houses in Kiryat Shmona, a favourite target for such attacks, and cut electricity supplies, but most of the Israeli casualties were light. Anticipating the revenge operation, the army had ordered the population into shelters.

Lebanese security sources said 60 rockets were fired. "There is tremendous dam-

age to property," Haim Barbi-vai, Kiryat Shmona's mayor, said, "but the people were in the shelters. We were ready for this situation. The rockets fell at the very hour the children are driven to school. I'm glad they stayed home today."

This week's violence has revived calls in Israel for the government to withdraw the army from southern Lebanon. Yossi Beilin, a minister in the last Labour administration, said yesterday: "There is no need to stay in a security zone that is not ours, which has not succeeded in preventing Katyusha or other problems, or the killing of soldiers."

In Gaza yesterday, Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority released Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the spiritual leader of Hamas, from house arrest. Sheikh Yassin was confined to his home on 29 October after one of the group's suicide bombers attacked an Israeli school bus.



A child salutes during the funeral in Baalbek yesterday of a Lebanese woman and her six children killed in an Israeli air raid

Reuters

FRONTLINE BETHLEHEM

O little town of bickering

YASSER ARAFAT, a devout Muslim, hymned it as the birthplace of the Prince of Peace. Bill Clinton came seeking salvation and a First Family photo-op. But the little West Bank town of Bethlehem is on a front line within a front line, the confrontation zones between Jew and Arab, Muslim and Christian, Rome and Byzantium.

You feel the tension first as you drive in from Jerusalem, five miles away. Armed Israeli troops man a checkpoint. "Prepare all documents," admonishes a sign in Hebrew, Arabic and English. The queue of vehicles is longer coming out than going in.

Rachel's Tomb, much frequented by barren women yearning for children, looks more like a fortress these days than a biblical shrine. After Israel evacuated Bethlehem just before Christmas three years ago, the tomb remained under Jewish control, but on the fringe of Palestinian territory. The army built a mock-Herodian bastion and posted more soldiers.

Whenever angry young Palestinians want to resurrect the intifada, this is the arena. Rachel's Tomb, where the road forks left into Bethlehem, is their front line.

The Palestinian police man no checkpoints. Across the divide, it is as if Bethlehem has written off Christmas 1998. Manger Square, once the world's most sacred car park, looks more like the world's most sacred building site. This year has been mortgaged to the millennium.

"Two thousand years ago," boasted the mayor, Hanna Nasser, "a turning point in history took place here." To mark and market the anniversary, the Palestinian Authority is spending \$130m (£78m) of worldwide donations on a facelift. Manger Square is being paved and landscaped, long neglected roads resurfaced. "They'll be lucky if they're finished by 2500," said my Arab driver.

An oppressive stone and cement police station built by the British in 1938 and manned successively by British, Jordanian and Israeli occupiers, has been replaced by a huge hole in the ground. A Nativity museum and peace centre is planned for the site. Hotels and hostels are going up for the 3 million pilgrims expected between

Christmas 1999 and Easter 2001. "Bethlehem," said the mayor, a Catholic businessman, "should be a Mecca for Christians."

The irony was deliberate. Bethlehem is a Christian holy city with a growing Muslim majority. Mr Nasser acknowledged that 65 per cent of his 30,000 citizens are Muslims, only 35 per cent Christians.

The sixth-century Church of the Nativity at one end of Manger Square is echoed by a mosque at the other. Knowing which side Bethlehem's bread is buttered, the Palestinian Authority has decreed the mayor and deputy mayor will always be Christian.

"Christmas Message is Justice and Peace," proclaims a banner near Nativity Church. "Christ is the Saviour." It is signed: "Fatah, the Palestinian National Liberation Movement." Fatah, Yasser Arafat's power base, is renowned for many things, none of them pacifism or Christian piety.

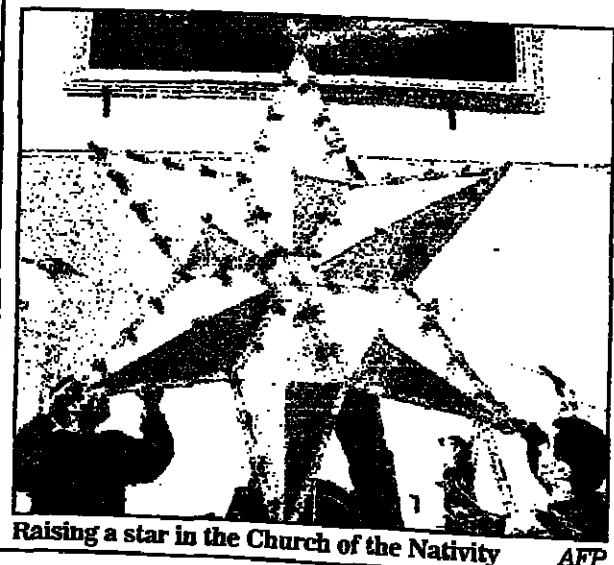
Inside the church, the third front line is set in stone. It is no accident that midnight mass, televised around the world on Christmas Eve, is relayed not from the Emperor Justinian's Byzantine basilica but from a modern Catholic church built alongside it. In the Holy Land, sites spell status. The tug of war between the Catholic and Orthodox churches goes back at least as far as the Crusades.

"In an extraordinary display of tolerance," wrote the Dominican scholar Father Jerome Murphy-O'Connor in his Oxford guide to the Holy Land, "the Crusaders and Byzantines co-operated in the restoration of the church between 1165 and 1169." Mutual tolerance has been hard to come by ever since.

A few years ago, when the Israelis still governed Bethlehem, rain started pouring through the 12th-century roof. It had been under dispute for a century after the Turks removed some of the lead for ammunition. The churches could not agree who should fix it.

At the request of the Armenians and Catholics, a Jewish official stepped in, hiring a Muslim contractor to coat the roof with white plastic. The Israeli taxpayer footed the £30,000 bill. The Greeks registered their "dismay" at the intrusion.

ERIC SILVER



Raising a star in the Church of the Nativity

AFP

...the twins want to sing
'Silent Night' for you...

...I'll go and get Mum...

...what do you mean you're not
having turkey?

...no Vicky's down south,
but John's here...

...little Sean wants to tell
you about his new bike...

...just a mo, Susie's
somewhere...

...say hello to your
cousin Sal...

...I'll go and wake
up your Dad...

...hang on, Gran's
coming to the phone...

...I'm handing you
over to Uncle Peter...

...you're right, there is
nothing on TV...

...your brother's here,
wish him Happy Chrimbo...

...Uncle Vic wants a word...

...I'll drag Aunt Em away
from the washing up...

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for no more than 50p.

On Christmas Day and New Year's Day with BT you can phone whoever you like in the UK, for as long as you like, and you'll never pay more than 50p for the call. That's right - local and long distance calls. So, forget about the turkey for a few minutes and pick up the phone for a good old natter. This offer is just one more reason for being with BT.

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صكزا من الارامل

Ex-Nato chief guilty of corruption

THE FORMER Nato secretary-general, Willy Claes, was given a three-year suspended jail sentence yesterday at the end of Belgium's biggest political corruption trial of recent years. Mr Claes and two other former ministers were found guilty after a bitterly fought, four-month hearing seen by many as an indictment of the Belgian political establishment.

By STEPHEN CASTLE in Brussels
victed Mr Claes of corrupt dealings in two defence contracts awarded when he was economics minister in the late Eighties. The court also gave two-year suspended sentences to former defence minister Guy Coeme and the former head of the French-speaking wing of the Belgian Socialist Party (PS), Guy Spitaels. The same sentence was meted out to Serge Dassault, head of France's Das-

sault aviation company, which was at the heart of one set of bribery accusations. He and Mr Claes were each fined 60,000 Belgian francs (£1,070). Eight other former aides and associates were convicted and received suspended sentences of up to two years.

Although Mr Claes did not benefit personally, the court ruled that he must have known donations to his party were linked to the contracts. It concluded that, in 1988, Mr Claes had to know that when the Ital-

ian company Agusta SpA bid for a contract for 46 army helicopters, it was discussing a bribe for the Flemish-speaking Belgian Socialist Party (SP). The presiding judge ruled that, in the Agusta case, "the accusation of passive corruption has been proven for Willy Claes".

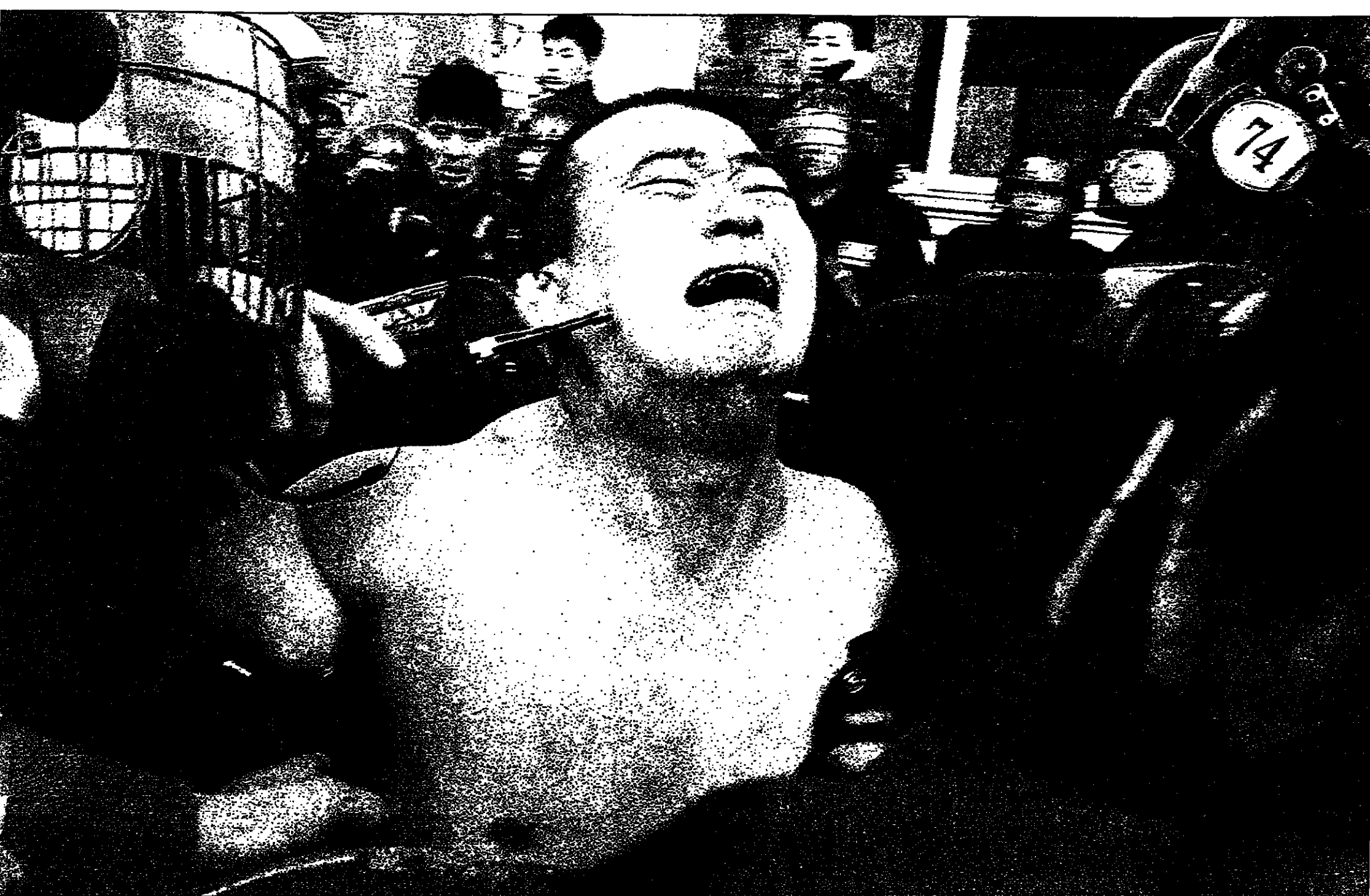
He said Mr Claes and others bent the contract rules at the expense of the rival bidder, France's Aerospatiale SA. The court also found that a donation of Bfr60m (£10.7m) from Dassault Aviation SA was linked to an aircraft equipment deal.

The Agusta and Dassault bribes were paid to Belgium's Flemish-speaking and French-speaking socialist parties through secret Swiss and Luxembourg bank accounts. In 1989 Belgium outlawed such corporate donations to political parties.

The trial in the 15-judge high court came after the parliamentary immunity of Mr Claes and others had been lifted. Prosecutors had to prove only that the Agusta and Das-



Willy Claes: Bent the rules



South Korean riot police arresting a monk yesterday at Chogye Buddhist temple in Seoul, where there is a long-running dispute between Buddhism factions

Choo Youn-Kong/AFP

Buddhist temple stormed by police

By ROBIN BULMAN in Seoul

SOUTH KOREAN police raided the headquarters of the country's main Buddhist sect yesterday to enforce a court order against dissident monks who had been occupying part of the temple grounds for more than a month.

By the time the raid was over, at least one riot policeman had been rushed to hospital with serious injuries, two monks had slashed themselves and threatened suicide and the temple's administrative building had been scorched.

Police said 18 people, mainly police, were in hospital, while 76, including 53 monks, were arrested. At 4am local time, 6,000 riot police began gathering around the temple. More than 1,000 were in the grounds when the raid began.

Monks occupying the administrative building placed jugs of petrol along the building's ledges and threatened suicide via loudspeakers if the police tried to storm the building.

The raid was the latest chapter in a violent power struggle in the election of leadership of the Chogye Order of Buddhism. Dissident monks last month drove out supporters of the former leader Song Wol-ju when he announced his candidacy for a third four-year term. Dissidents said that violated a limit of two terms imposed in 1994. (Reuters)

Jazz singer conquers Russia's racial bigotry

By PHIL REEVES

TWENTY-FIVE years ago, give or take a week or two, Tim Strong had a chance meeting with Aretha Franklin. He was an awkward and unknown 18-year-old, one of nine children from a blue-collar family in Salisbury, Pennsylvania. She was... well, the Queen of Soul. An aspiring musician, with an unusually powerful voice, he was sitting at the piano at a rehearsal studio in New York when Franklin wandered up and asked him to sing. Suddenly overwhelmed by nervousness, he declined. "I made a lot of mistakes back then, and that was one of them," he recalls.

Since then, both his nerves and his career have taken a turn for the better. They have done so in the unlikely setting of the former Soviet Union, where jazz was once banned as subversive, and black artists were - and still are - few and far between.

After moving to Moscow three years ago, where his wife was posted as a diplomat with the New Zealand embassy, Strong, 45, has become an acclaimed performer who pulls crowds in clubs and concert halls across 11 time zones.

Acclaimed is no exaggeration. Not long ago, 10,000 people turned out to see him in Akademgorodok. The *Moscow Tribune* newspaper has hailed Strong as "arguably the greatest jazz singer in Russia today". Art Tait, a Russian commentator and music critic, says he is the greatest blues performer in the land. "Not since Paul Robeson in the late 1940s has an African-American singer created such a sensation in what was once the Soviet Union," declared *Newsweek*.

This is no small achievement in a society where atti-



Tim Strong: Acclaimed across 11 time zones

tudes to race range from ignorance and low-level xenophobia to the rabid views of the small, but growing far right. Abuse and attacks against black foreign students are depressingly commonplace; a few months ago, a US marine was badly beaten by young racist Russians in a Moscow park.

Tim Strong could scarcely have failed to be aware of such problems but he says he has never experienced any threatening instance of racism directed specifically at him. There have, however, been moments of outright crassness; for example, seeing his dreadlocks, Russians tend to ask if he is Whoopi Goldberg's brother.

"People in Russia are just not sensitive to race," he said, sitting in his spacious apartment in central Moscow. "I remember I was in a mafia-type joint and this guy asked me to

Ministers complain to BBC over Iraq news

THE GOVERNMENT has admitted trying to exert pressure on the BBC to toe the line in its coverage of the bombing of Iraq.

Robin Cook, Foreign Secretary, George Robertson, Secretary of State for Defence, and the Prime Minister's spokesman have all contacted the BBC informally to express their "disquiet" about the corporation's reporting of the conflict.

The Government's behaviour echoes similar Conservative complaints about Kate Adie's coverage of the 1986 bombing of Libya. It has been

By PAUL MCCANN Media Editor
criticising the BBC for a lack of "health warnings" on news reports coming out of Baghdad.

The corporation, the Government felt, could have done more to tell viewers its reports from bombed sites in the city were subject to Iraqi government censorship.

A Downing Street spokesman said yesterday: "There hasn't been a formal complaint and, if there was one, it wouldn't come from the Prime Minister

in person. But there has been disquiet. Alastair Campbell, Robin Cook and George Robertson have had conversations with the BBC."

The BBC's chief executive of news, Tony Hall, is believed to have been the target of the Government's pressure.

The government spokesman noted that Sky's reports from the Iraqi capital had made clear they were sent under Iraqi restrictions.

A spokesman for the BBC denied any pro-Iraq bias and said all of its bulletins had made clear that reports from

Baghdad were subject to restrictions on where reporters could go.

Meanwhile in Washington the National Security Adviser, Sandy Berger, said the Clinton administration would keep economic pressure on Iraq unless it gets rid of its remaining chemical and biological weapons.

"The sanctions regime that has already cost Saddam \$120bn (£73bn) will stay in place without change until there is verified compliance," Mr Berger said in an address at the National Press Club.

Man-hunt traps rail blackmailers

GERMAN TRAIN passengers breathed a sigh of relief yesterday as police announced the capture of two blackmailers who had tried to hold the national railway company to ransom by sabotaging the tracks.

After an unprecedented man-hunt involving Tornado jets, military satellites and hundreds of troops, anti-terrorist units seized one of the extortionists at a Bavarian service station. The suspect, a 46-year-old man from eastern Germany, had turned up to collect a DM10m (£3.7m) ransom.

Investigators say he con-

fessed to three attacks last week on rail lines running from Berlin. The extortionists, calling themselves "Friends of the Railways", had placed obstacles on the track. A Swedish freight train was derailed, but no one was hurt. After his capture on Tuesday, the man said he had placed bombs in several railway stations. No bomb was found.

Yesterday morning, a second man was arrested. Police say one of the two held a grudge against the railway company.

DAVID AARONOVITCH



Blair is determined not to drop body parts into the press piranha tank

IN THE THURSDAY REVIEW PAGE 3

IN BRIEF

- Help floods in for Texan octuplets**
AS THE world's first surviving octuplets kept up their struggle to survive, the babies' family was inundated yesterday with offers of infant supplies. Doctors at the Texas Children's Hospital in Houston said the children remained in a critical condition, with few signs of change since birth. Their mother, Nkem Chukwu, is recovering from the Caesarean birth of seven of the babies.
- US to expel Cuban diplomats**
THE US State Department plans to expel three Cuban diplomats at the United Nations in New York for alleged espionage. The department gave the Cuban mission 24 hours to argue against expelling the three but it received no response. The case was connected to the arrest of 10 alleged Cuban agents in Miami in September.
- Jail for giving son 'illegal' name**
A NORWEGIAN woman was jailed for two days for giving her son a name the authorities did not like. Kirsti Larsen, 46, had refused to pay a fine imposed for choosing the name "Geshen" for her 13th child, born in 1995. Norwegian authorities have a list of approved children's names. Geshen is Hebrew for "bridge".
- Banana sentencing put on hold**
ZIMBABWE'S HIGH Court yesterday delayed until next month the passing of a sentence on the former president Canaan Banana. Banana, 62, returned to Zimbabwe last week after jumping bail and fleeing to South Africa when he was convicted last month of 11 offences of sodomy.

THE INDEPENDENT
Thursday 24 December 1998

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BUSINESS

MPC vote opens way for more interest rate cuts

BRIEFING

BMW denies merger talks

BMW YESTERDAY denied it had held merger talks with any rival car makers or that it was under pressure from its controlling shareholders, the Qand family, to seek an alliance. There have been reports linking BMW to a possible merger with its German counterpart Volkswagen or Fiat of Italy.

The denial came as fresh speculation emerged in the United States about a possible link-up between Ford and the Swedish car maker Volvo. A Volvo spokesman confirmed that it was discussing the possibility of co-operation with a number of car makers but declined to go into details. Meanwhile BMW said it would take a decision in the next four to five months on a £1bn investment in a replacement for the Rover 200-400 series, which is due to be built at Longbridge in Birmingham.

Pendragon takes over rival

PENDRAGON, the car dealership chain, yesterday announced the takeover of its rival Evans Halsbury, in an £53.7m deal which will create the UK's largest motor retailer. The Derby-based company, led by chief executive Trevor Finn (left), launched an agreed 260p-a-share bid for Evans and said it had already received acceptances from shareholders controlling 33.6 per cent of the group. Evans closed up 5p to 281p. Pendragon was unchanged at 151.5p.

Body Shop buys German stores

BODY SHOP, the environmentally friendly cosmetics company, yesterday bought out Cosmo Trading, a privately owned firm which runs the franchises on 20 of Body Shop's 73 stores in Germany, the chain's fifth biggest market. Body Shop is paying DM20m (£7.1m) for the chain, which made a profit of DM2.67m in 1997.

Managers to buy Mappin & Webb

THE MANAGEMENT of Mappin & Webb, the upmarket jeweller, was last night poised to buy the company from the Asprey Group for an undisclosed sum. The buyout team, led by the Mappin & Webb managing director Judith Pilkington, was also set to acquire Watches of Switzerland, the Rolex retailer and the pawnbrokers TM Sutton, EA Barker and Nathan & Co, also part of privately-owned Asprey.

STOCK MARKETS									
FTSE 100			DOW JONES			NIKKEI			
5950	5900	5850	9300	9100	8900	14300	14100	13900	13700
5950	5900	5850	9300	9100	8900	14300	14100	13900	13700
Dow Jones index and graph on page 11									
INDICES									
Index	Close	Change	High	Low	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yr chg	Vol	Yr chg
FTSE 100	5908.00	65.50	1.12	5183.70	4599.20	3.18			
FTSE 250	4798.00	34.70	0.73	5970.90	4247.60	4.82			
FTSE 350	2777.80	29.20	1.06	2969.10	2210.40	3.42			
FTSE All Share	2877.23	27.56	1.04	2886.52	2143.53	3.47			
FTSE SmallCap	2044.40	12.80	0.63	2793.80	1834.40	4.11			
FTSE 100 Div	1132.90	6.90	0.61	1217.10	1046.20	0.60			
FTSE AIM	782.20	0.70	0.09	1146.90	761.30	0.90			
FTSE EBLCC 100	986.18	16.08	1.66						
Dow Jones	9144.62	101.70	1.12	9380.20	7400.30	1.64			
Nikkei	13779.45	-373.50	-2.64	17352.95	12787.90	1.06			
Hang Seng	10158.75	-163.81	-1.59	11926.16	6544.79	3.07			
Dax	4951.77	126.39	2.62	6217.83	3833.71	1.73			

INTEREST RATES									
SHORT STERLING			UK 10 YEAR GILT			US LONG BOND			
5.80	5.70	5.60	4.55	4.50	4.45	5.20	5.10	5.00	4.90
5.80	5.70	5.60	4.55	4.50	4.45	5.20	5.10	5.00	4.90
at 5pm									
MONEY MARKET RATES									
Index	3 month	Yr chg	1 Year	Yr chg	10 Year	Yr chg	Long bond	Yr chg	at 5pm
UK	6.37	-1.31	5.71	-1.98	4.42	-1.79	4.30	-1.87	
US	5.25	-0.66	5.06	-0.91	4.75	-0.75	5.17	-0.75	
Japan	0.53	-0.20	0.59	-0.12	1.94	0.02	2.61	0.07	
Germany	3.31	-0.39	3.18	-0.78	3.90	-1.33	4.81	-1.01	

CURRENCIES									
S/E			D/M/E			W/E			
1.688	1.682	1.676	2.815	2.805	2.795	1.97	1.96	1.95	1.94
1.688	1.682	1.676	2.815	2.805	2.795	1.97	1.96	1.95	1.94
at 5pm									
FOUND									
Index	Close	Change	Yr Ago	at 5pm	Change	Yr Ago	at 5pm	Change	Yr Ago
Dollar	1.6777	+0.011	1.6491		0.5861	0.000	0.6078		
D-Mark	2.8063	-0.23p	2.9743		1.6728	-0.19p	1.7987		
Yen	194.78	-11.20	215.94		116.05	-14.79	130.58		
E index	101.00	-0.10	104.90		5 index	105.10	-0.30	108.40	

OTHER INDICATORS									
Index	Close	Chg	Yr Ago	Index	Close	Chg	Yr Ago	Index	Close
Brent Oil (\$)	10.03	0.22	17.01	GDP	115.40	3.00	112.04	Dec	
Gold (\$)	285.45	-2.80	294.05	BPI	164.40	3.00	159.61	Dec	
Silver (\$)	4.89	0.00	6.03	Base Rates	6.25	7.25			

TOURIST RATES	
Australia (\$) 2.6438	Mexican (nuevo peso) 14.92
Austria (schillings) 19.14	Netherlands (guilders) 3.0687
Belgium (francs) 56.28	New Zealand (\$) 3.0762
Canada (\$) 2.5418	Norway (kroner) 12.57
Cyprus (pounds) 0.8043	Portugal (escudos) 278.04
Denmark (kroner) 10.43	Saudi Arabia (rials) 6.1243
Finland (markka) 8.3054	Singapore (\$) 2.6552
France (francs) 9.1469	Spain (pesetas) 231.63
Germany (marks) 2.7353	South Africa (rand) 9.5333
Greece (drachma) 458.49	Sweden (kroner) 13.18
Hong Kong (\$) 12.62	Switzerland (francs) 2.2326
Ireland (pounds) 1.0936	Thailand (bahts) 55.98
India (rupees) 64.23	Turkey (liras) 499.82
Israel (shekels) 6.5018	USA (\$) 1.6419
Italy (lira) 2712	
Japan (yen) 191.54	
Malaysia (ringgits) 6.1247	
Malta (lira) 0.6105	

Rates for indication purposes only

Source: **Thomas Cook**

HOPE OF a new year cut in UK interest rates were given a boost yesterday after it emerged that the Monetary Policy Committee voted unanimously to reduce rates earlier this month amid concerns about slowing consumer expenditure.

Eight of the MPC members voted to cut rates by 0.5 percentage points to 6.25 per cent, with Willem Buiter, the Dutch academic, again urging the committee to cut by 0.75 points.

The minutes of December's MPC meeting, released yesterday, revealed that members were particularly concerned about slowing consumption, reflected in weak retail sales figures, as well as the rapid build-up of stocks.

The weakening domestic economy, combined with slower growth overseas, meant that "the downside risks had increased since the previous meeting".

Numerous committee members believed further interest rate cuts would be required in the coming months to prop up the weakening UK economy, reigniting hopes of another cut in rates in early January.

Until yesterday, a January rate cut had been thought unlikely following the release last week of stronger-than-expected figures for November retail sales.

Adam Cole at HSBC Securities said: "In the absence of these minutes, it seemed sensible to believe the MPC would sit on its hands in January. Now it looks like rates could fall again next month."

Hopes of lower interest rates helped the FTSE 100 share index to close up 65.5 points at 5908.3. Sterling ended the day marginally lower against the German mark at DM2.8065.

The minutes - which give the voting records of each com-

mittee member and a summary of the arguments - revealed the MPC was split into three camps.

The first, assumed to consist solely of Mr Buiter, believed that an immediate cut more than 0.5 points was justified both by the rapid deterioration of the economy and the low level of rates elsewhere.

The second, thought to include DeAnne Julius, the former chief economist at British Airways, expressed concern that a cut of more than 0.5 points could unsettle the markets.

The third camp, though to consist of Eddie George, the Bank of England Governor, and most of the Bank staff, thought a 0.5-point cut was appropriate, given the data flow during November.

The minutes also reveal that the committee had a detailed discussion about the "neutral level" of interest rates - that is,

Trade gap respite is only temporary

BRITAIN'S TRADE deficit with the rest of the world narrowed in October from record levels in September, although analysts said a recent surge in cheap imports meant the improvement in the trade position was only temporary, writes Lea Paterson.

The UK's deficit on traded goods was a lower-than-expected £1.6bn in October, according to official figures released yesterday, down from £2.5bn in September. Trade in services appeared little affected by the weak international economy, and yielded a healthy surplus of £1.1bn.

The overall trade deficit for October was down to £0.5bn from £1.5bn in the previous month.

Brian Wilson, the Trade Minister, said: "These figures suggest the September figures were well out of line and that Britain's exporters are continuing to fare reasonably well in the face of extremely difficult world conditions."

However, most economists were gloomy about the outlook for UK trade, and preliminary indications for November were worse than City expectations. According to the Office for National Statistics, the deficit in traded goods with countries outside the EU widened to £1.8bn in November from £1.4bn in October.

Greene King backs Wolves' Marston bid

WOLVERHAMPTON & DUDLEY took a big step towards winning the battle for control of Marston, Thompson & Evershed, the regional brewer, as it clinched a deal yesterday that removes a potential rival bidder from the field.

If its bid succeeds W&D, will immediately sell 170 of Marston's pubs to Greene King, the Suffolk brewer, for about £80m. In return, Greene King has pledged not to table a rival offer for Marston unless a new bidder enters the fray.

The deal will also bolster W&D's balance sheet, allowing it to raise the cash part of its offer. Observers had worried that the bid was stretching W&D's balance sheet to dangerous levels.

The news knocked Marston shares, which dipped 8p to 287.5p. Greene King rose 2p to 517.5p. W&D shares rose 6p to 422.5p, taking the value of the group's cash and shares bid to 281p per Marston share.

"This is good news for everyone except Marston, and an increased bid of around 10 percent by Wolves would probably be acceptable to most investors," said Nigel Popham, an analyst at stockbrokers Thea and Greenwood.

But Marston immediately hit back at W&D, suggesting the sale would incur a capital gains tax charge and dilute the group's earnings. "This is a poor deal driven by a need for



If W&D wins its battle for control of regional brewer Marston, it will immediately sell 170 Marston pubs to Suffolk brewer Greene King. *Kiran Bradley/Page One*

GEC signs up for \$3bn Euro space merger

BY PETER THAL LARSEN

GEC YESTERDAY took time out from negotiating the restructuring of the European defence industry to sign a merger creating the first pan-European space group.

The deal, bringing together the space operations of four of Europe's largest firms, creates a company with 11,000 employees and annual revenues of more than \$3bn (£1.8bn).

It will be by far the largest space company in Europe, capable of taking on US players such as Lockheed Martin and Boeing.

GEC is participating through Matra Marconi Space, its joint venture with the French aerospace group Lagardere. Dasa, DaimlerChrysler's aerospace division, and Italy's Finmeccanica will also be contributing their space operations to the new company. The companies did not say how holdings in the new company would be divided between the four owners.

The deal, expected to be completed next year, marks the end of two years of negotiations aimed at matching the consolidation in the US aerospace and defence industry. However, it excludes Alcatel Space, a joint venture including the French defence electronics group Thomson-CSF.

The new company will be one of only two in the world capable of offering a complete range of space operations.

Armand Carlier, now chief executive of Matra Marconi Space, will become the first chairman of the board of directors of the new company. Each participant will appoint two members to the board.

In a joint statement, GEC and Lagardere said the new company aimed to capture a major share of the growing market for space-based commercial telecoms systems.

GEC and Finmeccanica yesterday also formalised their joint venture in missile systems and air traffic control, Alenia Marconi Systems, which will have estimated sales of £1bn.

SFA expels five members for rule breaches

THE SECURITIES and Futures Authority, the stockbrokers' regulator, yesterday expelled five members and suspended one for separate breaches of its rules.

Andrew Gibson, a trader formerly employed by Refco Overseas Ltd, entered into a series of artificial transactions in early 1997 to boost his desk's six-month profit figures, thereby inflating the bonus pool in which he had a 40 per cent stake.

Mr Gibson, who has been dismissed by Refco, was expelled from the SFA, barring him from working as a trader. He was ordered to pay the SFA's costs of £4,400.

Andrew Pender, a former trader at Bank Boston NA, was expelled for concealing losses on his book by mis-marking positions between October 1996 and September 1997. He must pay SFA costs of £5,000.

Frank Ntim, a deputy manager at Ghana Commercial Bank, was expelled and fined £2,200 for failing to co-operate with SFA demands for details of his bank accounts. Mr Ntim had misappropriated £5,202.46 from a dormant account holding interest monies belonging to his employer. He must pay SFA costs of £2,000.

Philip Penner, a derivatives trader at CSFB (Europe), was suspended for building up a

short futures position significantly in excess of his trading limits without authority.

Christopher Michael Sanders, a former employee of Falcon Securities UK, carried out unauthorised personal account dealings and rebroked profitable transactions from client accounts to one maintained for his own benefit.

The SFA expelled him and ordered him to pay £5,000 to its costs.

The individual fines came on the same day that Albert E Sharp, the private client stockbroker, was fined £200,000 by the SFA and severely reprimanded.

The fine related to widespread failures in reconciling dividends and stock in the year to August 1997.

Clients failed to receive payments correctly and on time and Albert E Sharp paid compensation for loss of interest. The company must pay £12,500 costs.

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AROUND THE WORLD'S MARKETS

LONDON

HOPE OF a New Year base rate cut helped shares to turn in an impressive performance although trading was thin. Footsie jumped 65.5 points to 5,908.3, its first closure above 5,900 since July. Supporting shares were also strong.

Marks & Spencer rallied a further 9.25p to 417.75p, despite the most savage profit downgrade yet to appear. A small brokerage, Seymour Pierce Butterfield, suggested this year's profits would fall to £760m; last year M&S produced £1.2bn.

Derek Pain, page 13

NEW YORK

SHARE PRICES on Wall Street were sharply higher in late morning trade, helped by heavy buying of technology stocks, although volumes were light.

The Dow Jones was up 112 points at 112.26 at lunchtime, strapping off the news that the US economy expanded at 3.7 per cent in the third quarter, slightly slower than the forecast 3.9 per cent forecast rate. The technology sector was boosted by heavy interest in Internet shares.

FRANKFURT

GERMAN SHARES climbed sharply in thin trading on the last day before a four-day Christmas break. The DAX index closed 126.39 higher at 4,951.77 and traders were talking confidently of reaching 5,250 next week. DaimlerChrysler was more than 2 per cent higher at DM157.80. BMW was up almost 4 per cent at DM125.5 and VW gained over 3 per cent to DM135.

Banks and retailers also forged ahead, with Dresdner Bank up over 2 per cent and Commerzbank not far behind.

PARIS

TURNOVER WAS low on the Paris Bourse but prices were marked up and the CAC-40 index ended 51.95 higher at 3,872.42.

Shares eased initially after overnight news that Bouygues Telecom's losses will be above expectations, but Bouygues closed just 11 lower at Fr1,140 as the market rallied. AXA-UAP shed 5 to Fr785 after recent gains, but banks extended their runs. Oil stocks reversed early losses.

MILAN

SHARE PRICES closed higher in Milan, helped by Wall Street's early gains and the expectation that the Bank of Italy would cut interest rates, which was confirmed after the market closed when the official discount rate was cut from 3.5 per cent to 3 per cent. The rate cut will take effect on 28 December, bringing Italy in line with the other Euroland countries.

The Mibtel index closed 331 points or 1.46 per cent higher at 23,064, while the Mib30 rose 531 to 34,239.

Mandelson and the Ministry of Sorrows

WHEN PETER MANDELSON was appointed Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in July this column said he would not last very long. That was not to denigrate his abilities or doubt his capacity to handle the brief. Rather, it was a recognition of the fact that the Department of Trade and Industry has become the most accident-prone department in Whitehall.

Some departments serve as as springboards for ministerial careers. Others act as graveyards. The DTI fits firmly into the latter category. The last Conservative government got through 13 Trade and Industry Secretaries in the space of 18 years. Tony Blair is now on his third in 30 months. Scant surprise that it has earned the sobriquet of the Ministry of Sorrows.

Two of Mr Mandelson's predecessors also left the DTI with the whiff of scandal in the air. Leon Brittan was forced to resign over the Westland affair and Cecil Parkinson over an affair of the more familiar variety.

Others simply disappeared into the political wilderness. John Biffen went from being "semi-detached" to being completely detached. And who remembers Paul Channon's tenure at 1 Victoria Street, much less



MICHAEL HARRISON

The last government got through 13 Trade Secretaries in 18 years. Tony Blair is on his third in 20 months

those of Patrick Jenkin or John Nott? Peter Lilley is remembered for the Lilley Doctrine, which stipulated that no state-owned foreign company should be allowed to buy a British company. Although it was popular with Mr Lilley, it was ignored by everyone else, including the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Michael Heseltine (whom Mr Mandelson, incidentally, described recently as one of his political heroes) struggled manfully with the portfolio for three years, only to

Memo to Mandy: Keep your coat on

Our advice to Mr Mandelson in the Outlook column of 28 July, after he became Secretary of State

be remembered for something he failed to do: privatise the Post Office. Lord Young arrived at the DTI with a reputation as the minister who brought Mrs Thatcher solutions while everyone else brought her problems. He sold Rover for a song to British Aerospace and tried to reinvent the DTI as the Department for Enterprise but he too failed to leave a lasting impression.

In truth, the only politician who has left his mark indelibly on the DTI was Sir Keith Joseph, and that was by inventing privatisation and thus reducing the DTI to a shell of its former self. When Nicholas Ridley arrived a decade later he asked terrified officials exactly what the department was for as he breezed through its revolving glass doors.

That remains a very good question. Mr Mandelson was in the job for just four months and 26 days (an

even shorter tenure than that of Cecil Parkinson). And yet in that brief space of time he had begun to mould the DTI in his own image. With the patronage of Mr Blair he set about recreating the DTI as one of the great economic departments of state. Mr Mandelson's efforts culminated last week with the publication of his Competitiveness White Paper.

The document introduced us to the Mandelsonian vision of a "knowledge-driven economy," where entrepreneurs would become the lifeblood of Britain and enterprise would no longer be a dirty word.

the move to that new economic landscape.

Of course, the White Paper was also an attempt to wrest back the high ground from Gordon Brown, whose dislike of Mr Mandelson is well documented and whose determination to marginalise the DTI is well known.

Most recently the two Cabinet ministers had fought tooth and nail over proposals to give the Post Office more commercial freedom in the face of fierce Treasury opposition. Finally the Prime Minister was called on to intervene, but not before Brown sides had dismissed Mr Mandelson's package of reforms as "garbage and rubbish." With Mr Mandelson gone, his Competitiveness White Paper will probably be consigned to the dustbin like those of his predecessors.

In choosing Stephen Byers to replace Mr Mandelson, Mr Blair has swapped someone who cannot fill in a mortgage application properly for someone who cannot multiply seven times eight properly. But that apart, little else is likely to change.

Mr Byers is every bit the arch-moderniser and archetypal Blairite that his predecessor was. The light regulatory touch will surely remain, as will the pro-competition, pro-business stance that the DTI adopted under Mr Mandelson. On Fairness at Work and the minimum wage, Mr Byers is unlikely to be any more accommodating to the trade unions than his predecessor.

The in-tray contains one or two hot potatoes. Mr Byers will have to rule on whether Rupert Murdoch should be allowed to buy Manchester United. But at least his task is not complicated by being a close friend and neighbour of Mr Mur-

doch's daughter. He will also have to decide whether the RAC should be allowed to sell its roadside services arm to Cendant and pass on £35,000 windfalls to its members. At some point too, Mr Byers will have to decide when the coal industry can stand on its own two feet and the construction of gas-fired stations can resume (the one real blot on Mr Mandelson's otherwise impeccably business-friendly record).

But his real task will be to rebuild confidence in a department where morale has once again hit rock-bottom. For two decades now, its officials have struggled to adjust to one quick-fire change after another in style, policy and personnel. It has sapped the will and weakened the resolve. Moreover it has resulted in the DTI being held in low esteem by the business community.

As for Mr Mandelson, he will need his little black book and his famed contacts more than ever now. His skills are lost to the DTI forever, but who would bet against his political return after a suitable period of rehabilitation? Like one of his "exotic" predecessors at the DTI, Mr Mandelson could prove himself as much the comeback kid as Cecil Parkinson was for the Conservatives. Minus, of course, the love child.

Footsie catches festive spirit to surge over 5,900

SHARES WERE in celebratory mood again, with Footsie scoring a 65.5-point gain to top 5,900 for the first time since July. Hopes of another interest-rate cut in the new year and continuing New York exuberance helped sentiment.

The festive upsurge has taken the index into areas which seemed out of bounds only a few weeks ago. In the past seven trading sessions it has surged 374.4 points, bringing into sight the 6,000 Footsie forecasts common at the start of the year.

Behind you, much of the progress has been achieved on small volume. Many big hitters are away, preparing for their seasonal festivities. There is often a temptation for those left minding the shop to take what they see as precautionary actions which - in the thin trading conditions prevailing - have an exaggerated impact on prices.

Footsie is not far from the

CELEBRATED, running the Chilli's restaurants, could be in profit this year, says broker Beeson Gregory.

The company reported a half-year £666,000 loss, but analyst Ian Berry sees profits of £200,000 for the year to March. The Chilli's chain is being extended to five and the Starvin Marvin restaurants turned round. The shares are 6.75p against 21p two years ago.

6,179 peak hit in July. Such a display would have appeared laughable when wild rumours of a banking crisis and other bearish influences pressed the market to a year's low of 4,599.2 in October.

For once the rest of the market joined in the romp of the Footsie overlord. The mid cap index rose 34.7 points to 4,798, albeit still a long way off its 5,966.5 peak in June. And the small cap index rose 12.8 to 2,044.4 against its 2,792.7 high. Tips for the new year - real and rumoured - played a part in the market advance, although suspicions that more big bids would arrive early in 1999 also helped sentiment.

Rentokil Initial, the environmental group thought to be itching to make a corporate strike, rose 15.75p to 458.75p, a peak. It is known to have looked at Compass, but the strength of the contract caterer's shares, firm at 679.5p providing a capitalisation of £4.7bn, could make it too big to swallow.

British Petroleum flared 23.5p to 902p. The Amoco merger has still to be cleared, but an

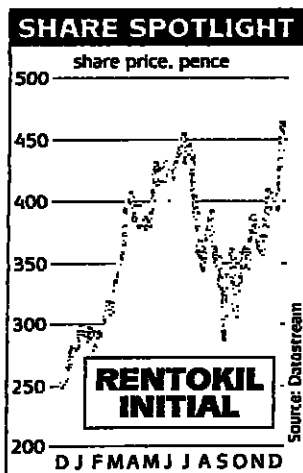
MARKET REPORT



DEREK PAIN

announcement is expected shortly. Many tracker funds have presumably increased their shareholdings in anticipation of BP's emergence as Footsie's biggest constituent. But others have, for various reasons, been forced to delay their buying: once the deal goes through they are expected to chase BP.

Marks & Spencer made further headway up 9.25p to 417.75p. But retail expert Richard Ratner, at a small stockbroking firm, Seymour Pierce Butterfield, moved profit forecasts to a new low - he is shooting for only £70m, cutting by £40m. He said Marks last



week experienced poor trading, exacerbating supply problems. The chain's stockpile was growing and many goods will have to be sold at knock-down prices in the new year.

This week SG Securities cut its Marks estimate from £860m to £805m, and Teather & Greenwood went from £860m to £785m. Last week Henderson Crosthwaite moved from £850m to £800m.

Shares of little retailer Cadore go from bad to worse. The chain, which has admitted trading problems, fell 0.25p to just 0.5p. The shares were 7.5p early this year.

General Electric Co's latest European joint ventures lifted the shares 6p to 543.5p as the cat-and-mouse defence companies alliance game became even more confusing.

There was a spate of bid activity among second liners, with some deals emerging through the rumours. BCH, a vehicle management group, accelerated 28.5p to 246p as Deutsche Bank mounted a 250p cash offer; house builder Banner Homes put on 22p to 140p when a management buyout at 143.5p appeared; and Vision, a digital camera chip maker, added 13p to 58.5p on the STMicroelectronics offer. Car dealer Evans Halshaw rose 5p to 261p following the Pendragon offer.

Goldsmiths, the jeweller, sparked 53p to 164p after what it described as a "very preliminary" approach, and Moss Bros smartened 16.5p to 150p on rumours of an Arcadia strike.

Marston Thompson & Evershed, the brewer, fell 8p to 287.5p once it became clear that Greene King, the East Anglian brewer, would not take on the white knight role. Greene King has agreed with hostile

LAST WEEK'S unsolicited and rejected bid for Avon Rubber - flat at 555p - may have led a major group to take a look at the maker of parts largely for the automotive industry.

The shares have bounced back from their low of 394p, but the group's impressive record, with profits hitting £26.4m last year, is likely to be deflated: profits of about £24m are expected.

bidder Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries to buy 170 Marston pubs for £80m if its offer goes through. Marston has bitterly resisted Wolves' £262m offer, but it now looks as though it may have to capitulate if Wolves can find the cash to top up its offer.

IT recruitment group MSB International continued its remarkable run following an upbeat trading statement, gaining 32.5p to 282.5p. ISA International jumped 8p to 42p as director David Heap took his stake to 22.1 per cent, and John Foster, giving up textiles to concentrate on property, fell 3.25p to 6.75p.

Tennet Life Sciences softened 1.5p to 13.5p following the surprise departure of chief executive Simon Douglas. Derby, a building materials group, fell 10p to 33.5p on a profit warning, and William Nash's failure to hang on to a key German contract left the shares 12.5p off at 142.5p.

SEAQ VOLUME: 477 million
SEAQ TRADES: 43.07
GILTS INDEX: 115.5 +0.55



The Thomas Cook chain is set to become part of Europe's largest holiday group Sinead Lynch/FT Pictures

Preussag books into Cook

THOMAS COOK last night looked set to become part of Europe's largest holiday group after the German conglomerate Preussag announced plans to buy a majority stake in the UK travel company.

The deal will lead to the formation of a tourism giant with turnover of over £4.6bn a year and more than 1,400 shops serving almost 10 million package travellers a year.

The Hannover-based giant yesterday put an end to months of speculation and announced that it had bought a 24.9 per

cent holding in Thomas Cook

BY FRANCESCO GUERRERA
cent holding in Thomas Cook, his German owner, Westdeutsche Landesbank.

Preussag, which shed its steelmaking business and has transformed itself into an industrial and tourism group, said it would increase its stake to 50.1 per cent by September if the deal received regulatory approval.

Financial details of the acquisition were not disclosed as Thomas Cook, the owner of the Sunworld and Flying

Colours tour operators, is not listed on the stock market. However, City analysts said Preussag could have paid up to £280m for the initial stake and was expected to shell out a similar amount to win control of the UK company.

The deal comes two months after Thomas Cook's decision to merge its worldwide business with the UK activities of the US leisure group Carlson.

Sources close to the company yesterday said that Preussag's interest would not scupper the Carlson deal.

They added that at the end of the complex web of transactions, Thomas Cook will be majority-owned by Preussag, with Carlson and WestLB sharing the remaining 49.9 per cent.

The German bank will retain significant influence through its minority holding in the new group and its 33 per cent stake in Preussag.

The new-look Thomas Cook will be headed by John Donaldson, an insider who is due to become chief executive of the UK company in January.

Pepper pockets £5m from BCH bid

BCH VEHICLE Management, bought out by its management three years ago and floated 12 months ago, has accepted a £40m bid from Deutsche Bank subsidiary ALD AutoLeasing, writes Clifford German.

Richard Pepper, the chief executive who led the buyout, will receive £5m in cash for his 12.61 per cent stake plus an undisclosed sum for his share options.

Shareholders include NatWest Bank, HSBC, Robert Fleming and BAT, all of which backed the 1995 buyout.

The bid is worth 250p a share, 47.5 per cent above the 169.5p close on 25 November when BCH revealed it had received an approach. It values the company at £39.6m compared with £31.6m when it floated at 200p a year ago.

Shareholders will receive a further interim dividend of 5p. The Bristol group includes AutoChoice, a personal contract purchase scheme, and conventional contract hire, leasing and fleet management services. It operates 16,000 vehicles on behalf of 700 companies.

The bid price is about 15 times forecast earnings of 16.5p in the year ending next week. Senior executive directors will stay with the company, to be renamed DB Vehicle Solutions.

Laporte warns of sales slowdown in chemicals

LAPORTE, the chemicals group undergoing a major overhaul, yesterday revealed slowing sales and warned that its major markets had deteriorated.

In a trading statement the company, which is selling non-core businesses to focus on specialty chemicals, said market conditions were "more challenging than six months ago".

The slowdown was particularly harsh in the electronics division, which makes chemicals for computer microchips.

Jim Leng, chief executive, said the business had had a very tough time as the semiconductor industry suffered its biggest downturn in 30 years. Second-half profits in the divi-

sion, which accounts for 10 per cent of group sales, would experience a "material reduction", the statement said.

However, Mr Leng expects Laporte to meet analysts' expectations of annual profits of £130m, thanks to a good showing by specialty chemicals. Sales in the division, boosted by August's £600m purchase of Inspec, were helped by strong demand from the drugs sector.

The company announced the sale of its hygiene division to its management for £31m. The money will be used to reduce Laporte's debt mountain, which stands at around £500m

after the Inspec acquisition. Mr Leng said the company was not under huge pressure to bring down its borrowings as interest cover stood at a comfortable 4.5 times.

He said the sale was consistent with his strategy of exiting non-core businesses. The division would have needed further investment as the European market for hygiene products was very competitive and very fragmented.

"You can't stay in non-core businesses where you have to keep acquiring to fill geographical and product gaps," he said.

Laporte shares rose 0.5p to 464p yesterday.

Goldsmiths soars on bid talk

SHARES IN Goldsmiths, the jewellery chain, shot up from 112p to 164p yesterday, after the group confirmed it had received a "very preliminary approach" which could lead to a bid.

Analysts suggested a trade sale to a large store chain or bid from rival jeweller Signet, but no hot favourite emerged. Goldsmiths has resisted the gloom that has overtaken most high street retail chains from Marks & Spencer down.

BY CLIFFORD GERMAN

running 10 per cent ahead of 1997 levels and Jurek Piasecki, the chairman and chief executive, has continued to predict sales increases in the run-up to the crucial Christmas period.

Analysts have only slightly trimmed their profit forecasts while still projecting a modest overall increase. But the shares have been badly affected by the market shake-out. Earlier this year the shares were trading at

220p and even after yesterday's rebound the market capitalisation is still under £38m.

Five leading shareholders, including M&G Investment Management, control 28 per cent of the shares and the directors a further 13 per cent. Last year the chairman and chief executive set out an ambitious target of doubling the size of the business by expanding the distribution and office facilities and embarking on a programme to open 15 new outlets a year.

Shareholders last year also approved an ambitious incentive scheme for the directors, which required them to increase earnings per share by 100 per cent over five years if they are to receive any benefit and by 150 per cent to derive the maximum value.

The base for the calculation is 15.3p a share in 1996. Earnings rose to 19.1p in the year to 31 January 1998 and analysts still expect 21.5p in the current year, rising to 25.3p next year.

IN BRIEF

Rio Tinto wins Australian mine

A CONSORTIUM led by Rio Tinto yesterday paid \$226.5m (£141m) to win control of Australia's largest thermal coal mine. The group, which includes Electric Power of Japan and the Australian pension fund UniSuper, bought a 31.4 per cent stake in the Blair Athol pit in Queensland from Atlantic Richfield. Rio Tinto now holds 71.3 per cent.

Banner buyout

BANNER HOMES, a small housebuilder, agreed to a £22.9m management buyout led by finance director Richard Werth. The buyout team, backed by venture capitalist 3i, offered 145.3p per share, a 23 per cent premium over Tuesday's close. The shares rallied 22p yesterday to close at 140p.

Malaysia eases

MALAYSIA IS to ease some of the capital controls imposed during the financial market turmoil in September: a government official confirmed yesterday, but they are unlikely to be scrapped altogether.

The government is to modify the rule banning foreign investors from taking money out of the country for at least a year. Instead the government may levy an "exit tax" that would favour long-term investors over short-term. The government has also approved a deal allowing some foreign investors to sidestep currency controls.

Kuala Lumpur's stock exchange rallied on hopes that the easing may tempt back foreign investment.

Daiwa rating cut

DAIWA BANK has had its credit rating cut to junk bond status by the credit agency, Standard & Poor's. Six other major Japanese banks, including Sumitomo Bank, also had their ratings cut. Standard & Poor's said most of the banks were facing mounting bad debts and "substantial" net losses.

Electra funding

THE PRIVATE equity group, Electra Fleming, said yesterday it provided the funding for the buyout of Safety-Kleen Europe from its US parent Safety-Kleen Corporation. Safety-Kleen supplies parts cleaning and spray-gun cleaning for the automotive and industrial markets in Europe and provides waste collection services.

SPORT

Football's Christmas spirit was all humbug

WELL, IT'S that time of the year again, chestnuts roasting on an open fire, holly and jingle bells. Yo, ho, ho, and all that jazz.

A time to remember, which someone on radio was up to the other night, recalling when League football was played on Christmas Day in a jovial atmosphere of back-slapping goodwill to all men.

He had to be kidding. What some of us call to mind, everyone who was then employed in the game, is 11am kick-offs on Christmas morning, long, jolting journeys on steam trains to fulfil return fixtures the next day; the cheerless waiting rooms of deserted railway outposts, feuds



KEN JONES

carried over, nursing injuries in heatless carriages, dry curled-up sandwiches washed down with a bottle of ale.

Because witless administration had yet to see the sense

in playing derby matches over Christmas, many teams covered hundreds of miles to play each other twice in 24 hours. Often, the results were ridiculous too. Frequently, home defeats were turned around on the morrow.

Old players speak not only of chaotic Christmas arrangements but the results of premature festive celebration. A personal favourite concerns a normally abstemious winger whose equilibrium on Christmas morning was sorely disturbed by a fall from the straight and narrow. Able to conceal this from stern management but fearful of disgracing himself on the

field, he begged not to be given the ball.

When his centre in the final minute led to an own goal that won the match, still finding it difficult to distinguish clearly between friend and foe, he proffered a congratulatory hand to the culprit. A punch, unseen by the referee, left him flattened in the back of the net.

Cautions, never mind sendings-off, were rare in those days but cursing in the earshot of some referees on Christmas Day could bring down retribution. My father discovered this in a match controlled by Stanley Rous, the schoolmaster who was knighted after

becoming an autocratic secretary of the Football Association and later president of the game's governing body, Fifa. In Rous's view my father's exclamation of "Jesus Christ" on a holy day justified a booking for blasphemy.

Probably because Christmas is associated with snow it usually brings me around to thinking about Sulky Gowers. Sulky, who ran a small night-club in the West End of London to which footballers were drawn in the long ago, hated snow. He loathed it almost as much as racecourse stewards and people who tried to put the arm on him. Snow made it difficult to

remain upright on a gammy leg and put up the cost of carnations for his button-hole. When it snowed and the damn stuff settled, nothing much happened in sport, which was a problem for Sulky, who claimed that denials of his gambling instinct brought on a headache. Sulky hadn't suffered a headache since he was 10 years old.

Sulky was exceedingly fond of footballers. He was fond of winning jockeys too, but footballers were his favourites.

In the days when greyhounds ran around Stamford Bridge there was a cafe across from the main entrance where Sulky held court before the

commencement of racing. On the Saturday evening before one Christmas he was taking tea there when a prominent London footballer crossed the threshold.

"How did you get on?" Sulky asked, warming his hands around a large cup, and with a wary eye on the weather because he smelt snow. "Lost 4-1," the footballer growled. "Listen," Sulky said. "I want you to give up the game. Take a six months course in etiquette and be my butler."

One New Year's Eve Sulky was in a London pub with a group that included the former Arsenal inside-forward Jimmy Logie, who was criminally

passed over by Scotland for all but one international match. Sulky was standing on a table singing one of his favourite refrains when a man he had conned in the guise of a solicitor, entered the premises. "Sulky, Sulky, give it a rest," one of his friends said, "look who's here." "So what?" Sulky replied. "Can't a solicitor sing?"

Like Sulky, the sound of supporters tramping to matches on Christmas morning has long gone. Doubtless, the majority now are astonished to hear of it happening. As for today's pampered heroes, the worst they can expect is the rotten inconvenience of a training session.

Plenty of faith left in Saint Matthew

Le Tissier has been through thick and thin at The Dell and he has no intention of giving it all up now. By Nick Harris

MATT LE TISSIER will never forget 12 February 1997. There were five minutes to go to half-time at Wembley, and England were 1-0 down to a Gianfranco Zola goal in a crucial France 98 qualifier. David Batty floated a deep cross into the box and the Italian goalkeeper drifted to leave an open net. Le Tissier rose to meet the ball and Glenn Hoddle leapt to his feet in the Royal Box, close to rapture that his faith in the Saint had paid off. The header flew narrowly wide and Le Tissier's England career was effectively over.

Fast forward to the canteen at Southampton's Marchwood training ground on a wet winter Tuesday. Mark Hughes is eating a jacket potato at the next Formica table, while Le Tissier is reflecting on a start to this domestic season that saw seven defeats and a draw in Southampton's first eight games, and, despite a brief rally, his team firmly rooted at the bottom of the table.

"There were a lot of changes very quickly [this summer] and it took a while for people to settle in," Le Tissier said. "But we didn't expect it to be that bad." It had, he added, taken some time to adjust to changes including the departure of Kevin Davies and the arrival of Hughes, Stuart Ripley and David Howells. "It was a very dodgy start and we've given ourselves a lot of work to do. But we're up for it."

When talking about the route to survival, which starts on Saturday at The Dell against Chelsea - unbeaten in 17 matches and with more than a touch of the Italian about them, including Zola - Le Tissier's voice has a levity that is not so much nonchalance as enlightened calm.

"We've been in a lot worse situations than this. And we're not a worse team than we were last season."

As the scorer of more than 200 goals (many of them crucial in relegation scraps) in nearly 500 appearances for the Saints, he is probably entitled to be a touch blasé.

"I'm a show-off," he said. "I just want to be the centre of attention. On a football pitch, I'm arrogant, in that I've got a belief in my ability, but that's as far as it goes. I'd hate to think that when I come off the football pitch I come across as an arrogant person, because that's not me."

Southampton fans, no doubt, appreciate the fact that Le Tissier has never felt the need to leave, but even they, at times, have been baffled by his loyalty. A few years ago a supporters' group even made a record, "Legend of a Saint", and pleaded through megaphones before a match for their hero to go to whichever club it was necessary to secure his England place. "It's nice that people want the best for me," Le Tissier said, but added he had simply never wanted to go, and that ultimately it was not loyalty, per se, that had kept him at The Dell, but selfishness.

"I didn't have an ambition to play for Liverpool or Manchester United," he said, explaining why he believes his higher motives have been equally well served on the south coast. "I had an ambition to play for England and you don't get any higher than that. Where's the lack of ambition there?"

Le Tissier has always said that should Southampton be relegated, he would seek to leave the club. Only this week, he said again it would be "very difficult" for him to play in the

First Division. But then he also said he believed that Saints will avoid the drop. "I would put money on us staying up."

Le Tissier sees no grounds for belief that his chosen course has been misguided. The argument that playing for a big club would have served his ambition better cuts no ice with him. Even an offer from Saturday's opponents, reportedly for £28m, when Hoddle was the manager, did not sway him. "I love the [Southampton] area. I love the club. The fans have been brilliant to me. I see no reason to move on. I'm happy with my life," he said. "People don't understand me as a person and what I want out of my life. I'm not in it just to make a fast buck and they [critics] think I'm

strange because they can't work me out. And I think that annoys people."

Surely, though, having not been picked for this summer's World Cup, even after scoring an England B hat-trick against an admittedly weak Russian B side, there were regrets that things could have been different? "I was a bit disappointed not to get in the squad of 30 he [Hoddle] announced," Le Tissier said. "But I've never given up hope."

He smiled, before adding: "I've only just turned 30. I think I'm capable of it. I just know that it's not going to take a few good games, its going to take a hell of a lot. But I'll never give up hope until somebody tells me they're never going to pick me."

So what of the future then? Will

the man Saints fans call "Le God" ever return to his best, the kind of form he produced for a season and a half under the tenure of Alan Ball, of all people, from January 1994 to May 1995 and that has not been consistently seen since?

"I played my best football under Bally without a shadow of a doubt because of the belief he had in me. He believed I was a good player. He popped me in the middle of the park and he said: 'Son, you go and do your own thing.' And he said to the other 10 players: 'Whenever you get the ball, as often as you can, give it to him.' And that made me feel like the best player in the whole world." In 60 League games under Ball, Le Tissier scored 34 times and in five

cup matches he scored another 10. His efforts kept Southampton up in 1994 and helped them to 10th place the following year.

Will that ever happen again? "The manager [Dave Jones] is starting to believe in me a little bit more than he did last season," said Le Tissier, adding that last season's 12th position could have been better. "I think we took the foot off the pedal a bit because we knew we were safe. You never know, we might get in that position again."

The only time Le Tissier answers a question hurriedly is when asked if there is anything in his career he would like to have done differently. "One thing," came the instant response. "The header I

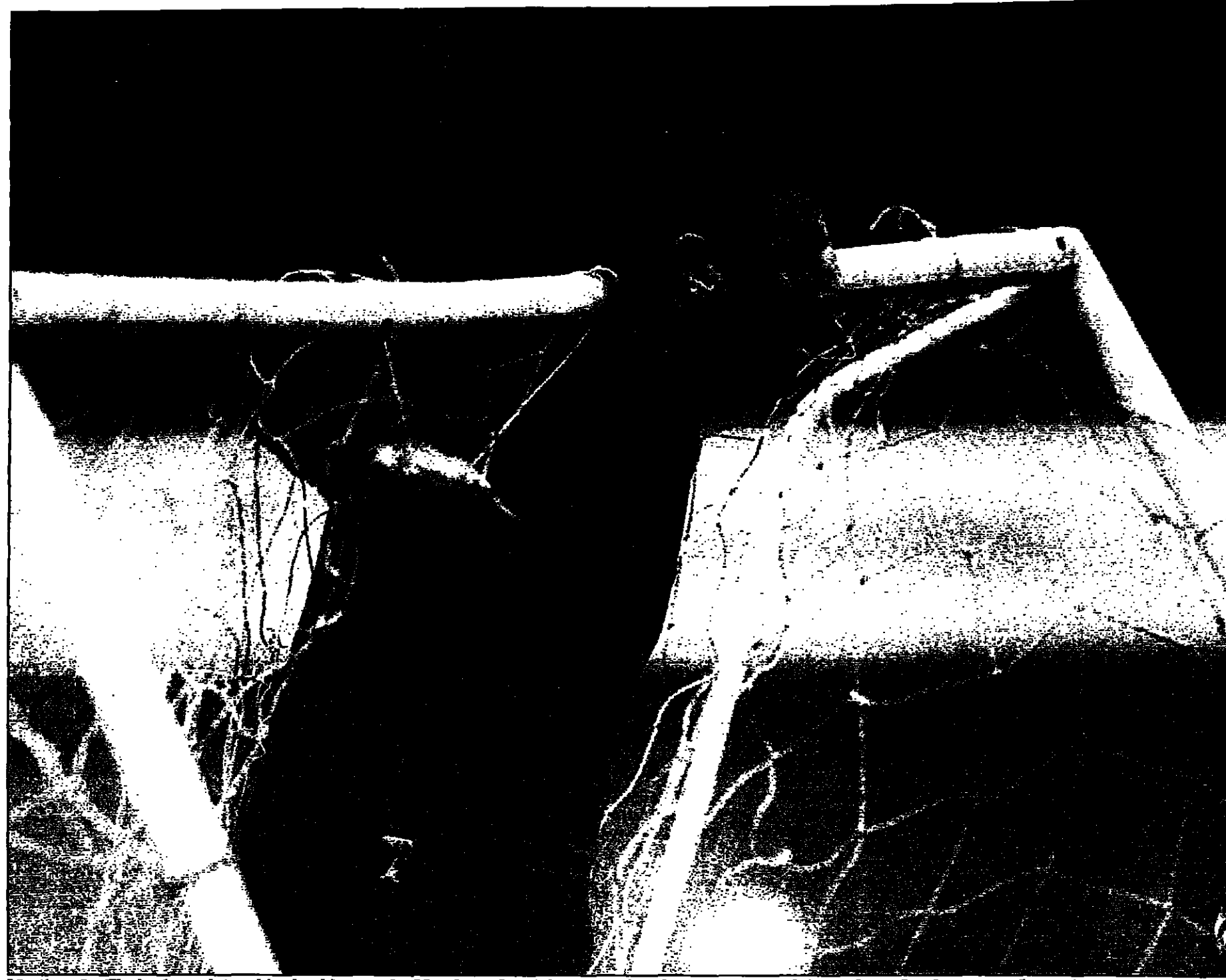
had against Italy would go just the other side of the post. And then it's a whole different game."

A local taxi driver has the last word, oft repeated about Le Tissier: "He doesn't run around a lot but he can still turn a game," said the cabbie. "And he's one of the nicest blokes you could ever meet."

"I picked him up once in Bedford Place [300 yards from The Dell], and he asked to go to The Dell."

"I said 'You're avin a laugh aren't you?' and he said 'It's a long way round that corner.'"

Short distances, whether the length of a walk to The Dell or the margin of that missed goal at Wembley, are obviously the bane of Saint Matthew.



Matthew Le Tissier has a lot on his shoulders at the Marchwood training ground, as he goes about helping to keep Southampton afloat this season Peter Jay

SPORTING QUIZ ANSWERS

Answers to sporting quiz of the year from page 18

WHERE IN THE WORLD

- 1 Royal Birkdale, where 17-year-old Justin Rose finished joint fourth in the Open
- 2 Silverstone, where Damon Hill spun out of the British Grand Prix
- 3 Wembley, where England played Saudi Arabia in a World Cup warm-up match
- 4 Atlantic City, where Lennox Lewis knocked out Shannon Briggs in March to retain his WBC heavyweight title
- 5 The Bissett Stadium in Oslo, where Britain's Mark Richardson inflicted a rare defeat on Michael Johnson
- 6 Sabina Park in Kingston, Jamaica, where England's Alex Stewart was among those who suffered because of the dangerous pitch, which led to the abandonment of the first Test against the West Indies
- 7 (centre) Stade Roland Garros, where Martina Hingis and Jana Novotna won the women's doubles title

TROUBLED TIMES

- 1 Adam Hooliako, who was describing the weather in Bangladesh during the England cricket team's defeat by South Africa in the Willis International Cup
- 2 France's Zinedine Zidane, who was sent off against Saudi Arabia in the Stade de France but went on to score two goals in the World Cup final
- 3 Faustino Asprilla after being substituted during Colombia's first World Cup game against Romania

- 4 Paul Goscoigne, whose provocative musical mime angered Celtic fans at the Old Firm match in January
- 5 Paul Ince, sent off in Sweden after two bookings

RECORD BREAKERS

- 1 Graeme Hick, who became the 24th cricketer to score 100 first-class centuries. He achieved the mark in his 574th innings, making him the third fastest centurion behind Don Bradman (295) and Denis Compton (552)
- 2 Mark Ramprakash, who hit his first Test century (after 38 innings) in the fifth Test against West Indies in Barbados
- 3 Notts County, who secured a place in the Second Division on 29 March, the earliest a club has achieved promotion in the Football League's 110-year history
- 4 Pat Symcox, who scored the first Test century by a No 10 batsman for 96 years when he hit 108 for South Africa against Pakistan in Johannesburg
- 5 Angus Fraser, who took his first 10-wicket haul in a Test match against the West Indies in Port of Spain in February

THE WEMBLEY WAY

- 1 France beat Wales 51-0 at Wembley in rugby union's Five Nations Championship
- 2 Arsenal, whose only goal in their FA Cup semi-final against Wolves was scored by the Liberator striker Christopher Wreh
- 3 Rugby league's Challenge Cup final, in which John Kear's Sheffield side upset the odds by beating Wigan
- 4 Marcelo Salas scored twice at Wembley

- 1 In February to give Chile a 2-0 victory over England, whose team included their youngest player this century, Michael Owen
- 2 Roberto Di Matteo, who scored for Chelsea in their Cup-Cola Cup triumph over Middlesbrough. He also scored Chelsea's opening goal in last year's FA Cup final

WINNERS AND LOSERS

- 1 Lancashire, who won two of cricket's limited-overs competitions, the NatWest Trophy and the Asa League, on successive days
- 2 Gianfranco Zola's goal gave Chelsea victory over VFB Stuttgart in the European Cup-Winners' Cup final. Chelsea had lost the trophy in Athens in 1971
- 3 Cambridge, who took advantage of advantageous weather conditions to win the 144th Boat Race in record time
- 4 Lee Westwood, who won the Freeport-McDermott Classic at English Turn, New Orleans, in only his eighth golf tournament in America
- 5 Port Vale's Allen Tankard missed the final penalty in an FA Cup third round shoot-out against Arsenal

GROUNDS FOR DEBATE

- 1 Richmond Rugby Club, who left the Athletic Ground to share with Reading Football Club
- 2 Halifax, who left Thrum Hall in March and moved into The Shay, home of the Conference winners Halifax Town

- 3 France, who used to play their major matches at the Parc des Princes in Paris, played their first match at the Stade de France in St Denis, venue of the World Cup final, in January
- 4 Everton fans celebrated Chelsea's 2-0 win over Bolton on the last day of the season, which guaranteed their club's Premiership survival
- 5 Crystal Palace, who recorded their first home Premiership win of the season on 18 April

FAME FOR 15 MINUTES

- 1 The London Scottish rugby union players who earned an FA Cup third round replay against Newcastle United
- 2 The 16-year-old Australian became the youngest tennis player to win an ATP event, the Australian men's hardcourt championship in February
- 3 The Stevenage Borough forward scored the equaliser to earn an FA Cup third round replay against Newcastle United
- 4 Olsson was the leader of Britain's four-man bobsleigh team, whose bronze was the only British medal success at the Winter Olympics in Nagano
- 5 Everton made Simonsen the most expensive goalkeeper in English football history when they agreed a £3.3m deal to sign him from Tranmere

END OF THE LINE

- 1 Tony Jarrett, the British athlete, who won the 110m hurdles at the Commonwealth Games
- 2 The England rugby union team, who

- stopped South Africa establishing a world record of 18 consecutive victories by beating them at Twickenham
- 3 Sunderland's Michael Gray, whose miss gave Charlton a 7-6 victory in the penalty shoot-out at the First Division play-off final
- 4 Liffan Thurnam, who scored both of France's goals in their 2-1 victory over Croatia in the World Cup semi-finals
- 5 Jack Nicklaus, who missed a major championship for the first time since 1961 when he pulled out of the Open at Royal Birkdale
- 6 Cal Ripken, who in September was left out of the Baltimore Orioles baseball team - at his own request
- 7 Natasha Zvereva, who beat Steffi Graf at Wimbledon
- 8 Heart of Midlothian, who ended years of disappointment for their fans by beating Rangers in the Scottish Cup final
- 9 Michael Atherton, whose run of consecutive Test appearances ended when he withdrew from the game against Sri Lanka
- 10 Rangers, whose attempt to win the Scottish championship for the 10th season in succession ended when Celtic beat St Johnstone 2-0 with goals by Henrik Larsson and Harald Brattbak

- hicks helped Saracens beat Wasps in rugby union's Tretley's Bitter Cup final
- 4 John Elway, the Denver Broncos quarterback, led his team to a 31-24 Super Bowl victory over the Green Bay Packers. He had been on the losing side in his three previous Super Bowl appearances
- 5 Mark O'Meara, who won his first major golf title with his triumph at the US Masters at Augusta in April

- 1 Hickie's try for Ireland against France was the first scored by Ireland in Paris since 1980
- 2 Catherine McGovern, who provided Ireland's first victory in the London Marathon
- 3 The European golf tour
- 4 Doug Walker, Doug Turner and Julian Golding, who took the first three places in the men's 200 metres final at the European athletics championships
- 5 The first Test between West Indies and England in Jamaica was abandoned after 56 minutes because of a dangerous pitch with England on 17 for 3
- 6 Olivier Peslier, riding High-Rise, held off John Reid, on City Honours, to become the first French jockey to win the Derby at Epsom since 1963
- 7 John Higgins won the world snooker championship by beating Ken Doherty
- 8 Crystal Palace's home game against Sheffield United was televised live in China following the signing of two Chinese internationals by Crystal Palace
- 9 Marco Pantani, winner of the Tour de France

THE GLOBAL GAME

- 1 Hickie's try for Ireland against France was the first scored by Ireland in Paris since 1980
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WHO SAID IT?

- 1 Tony Adams, the Arsenal captain, after his team's Premiership triumph
- 2 Dwight Yorke on his transfer from Aston Villa to Manchester United
- 3 Martin O'Neill, Leicester City manager, after Shearer's controversial challenge on Neil Lennon in April
- 4 Glenn Hoddle on David Beckham after his free-kick had helped England beat Colombia 2-0 and qualify for the second round of the World Cup
- 5 Glenn Hoddle explaining the omission of Paul Gascoigne from England's World Cup squad
- 6 Glenn Hoddle on David Beckham after the Manchester United player's sending-off against Argentina in the World Cup
- 7 Mika Hakkinen on pre-race nerves before his Formula One championship-winning triumph in the Japanese Grand Prix
- 8 Carl Llewellyn, rider of the Grand National winner, Earth Summit
- 9 Mark Taylor, Australia's cricket captain, on reaction to his decision to declare against Pakistan while he was on 334 not out. It was his career-best total and equalled that of Sir Donald Bradman
- 10 France's Laurent Blanc on being denied a place in the World Cup final when he was sent off after Croatia's Slaven Bilic had fallen theatrically in the semi-finals

King George VI Chase: The history of Boxing Day's showpiece suggests that last year's winner will triumph again

Tradition means Business as usual

THE FIRST 500 children to desert their presents on Boxing Day morning and go to Kempton Park will receive a cracker. All the spectators who attend the King George VI Chase card at Sunbury this Saturday will expect an athletic version in the afternoon. The portents suggest they will not be disappointed.

History shows us that the King George VI Chase fully deserves its reputation as the most prestigious conditions chase apart from the Cheltenham Gold Cup. In one sense though it is dramatically different from the Blue Riband.

When a horse wins Cheltenham's championship the chances of it doing so again seem to be minimal. Once a King George has been collected, however, you have to try monstrously hard to prevent another attaching itself to you. If See More Business, the victor 12 months ago, wins on Saturday, he will become the fourth dual winner of the contest in the last 10 years.

"See More", as they call him in his Somerset stable, is a nasty piece of work when he first comes in from a summer at grass. "He's not so bad once he's fit, but to start with when he comes back he's a real Jack the Lad," Paul Nicholls, the eight-year-old's trainer, said yesterday. "You have to be very careful and when you clip him he could literally kill you. His mood can change very quickly because he's got the aggressive streak which helps makes him such a good racehorse."

They have attempted to replicate See More Business' winning preparation at Ditchley this season and the challenge looks remarkably similar both in terms of figures in the form book and the horse's figure itself. "He's exactly the same as he was last year," Nicholls added. "He did a nice piece of work this morning and his weight is just right."

"I watched the King George last night and when you look at it afterwards you could say that the race did not turn out as strong as it looked going into it. On paper, it looks as though it could be even hotter this year with the likes of Tecton Mill and

Imperial Call in there, and it's obvious that any King George takes a lot of winning."

The favourite will be partnered by young Joe Tizzard, formerly a big name in the West country point-to-point division but a 19-year-old rather less trumpeted in the professional ranks. Tizzard does have ability, though, and at 6ft tall he can very nearly tie his legs under See More Business's belly and negate his mount's leaping deficiencies.

"The horse flew round last year and didn't make a mistake," Nicholls said. "He's clever more than anything else and he has to be because he's not a big, scopey horse and will never be an extravagant jumper."

RICHARD EDMONDSON
Nap: See More Business (Kempton 2.20)
NB: Lord Of The River (Kempton 1.10)

"We've had to live with his jumping and mistakes from day one, but he does seem to get round these big tracks. Joe suits him because he's such a good horseman."

Nevertheless, if there is a part of See More Business' armour that was not plunged into the Styx at birth, it is his jumping. The occasional lapses are a lifeline for those in opposition.

"See More Business is very tough and very game, a horse I admire a lot, but if he is put under pressure, his jumping lets him down slightly," Lorcan Wyer, Simply Dashing's jockey, says. "I think he got all the breaks going in the race last year and whether that will happen again is open to question."

Wyer's mount has not won for some time now, largely because of defective bellows, but now all appears to be right. "Simply Dashing came out of his latest race pretty good and at up well and his training has gone really well since," the Irishman said. "We are very hopeful he will run a big race."

"Some people have said that it doesn't have the look of a vin-



Emerging champion: See More Business (right) gallops out of the mist this week as he works towards Saturday's King George VI Chase at Kempton Robert Hallam

tage King George but I can assure you it's still going to take some winning. Mine will not look out of place and we are going down with a good chance."

"I don't know if it will be soft enough for the Irish horse (Imperial Call), and Tecton Mill has a little to find on the official ratings, although he could be a Jodami and go from running well in the Hennessy off a low weight to the very top. Who is to say he

has stopped improving? All round, it's a fascinating race."

It is difficult to assess what Imperial Call, the former Gold Cup winner, has achieved in victory in Ireland this winter. More certain is the fact that he will make the running.

Tecton Mill is the grey at-

tempting to continue the dynasty of Desert Orchid and One Man. He is almost 10 and has been hiding in point-to-point

fields almost all his life. If he takes this after just two efforts in handicaps, Elizabeth Taylor had better prepare herself for a reworking of an old role.

Escartefigue, one of David Nicholson's two runners, ex-

hibits flashes of form but you would not want his company in the trenches, especially not if he was behind you. Adrian Maguire deserts him to ride the accident-prone Mulligan. Challenger Du

Luc, last year's runner-up, is hardly one you could trust to go to pay the paper bill either but he does, at least, have form in the race and that counts on turkey-remains day.

Dessie, the four-time winner, will be there to advertise further that fact and it should pay to back the tradition being upheld at what is a traditional time of the year. Go for SEE MORE BUSINESS (nap 2.20).

Favourable forecast

THERE ARE 10 race meetings scheduled for Boxing Day and the forecast suggests that none will be troubled by the weather. The card at Wetherby, which features The Grey Monk in the Rowland Meyrick Chase, starts at 12.45, while at Wincanton (1.00 start) Wayward King's attempt to win the Mid Season

Chase for the second successive year provides the highlight. The other meetings, which will appear in Saturday's *Independent* with form guides, are at Ayr (12.55), Hereford (12.25), Huntingdon (1.00), Market Rasen (12.30), Newton Abbot (1.00 start), Sedgefield (1.00) and Wolverhampton (1.00).

KEMPTON - BOXING DAY

12.40 Lawahik	HYPERION	2.20 Imperial Call (nb)
1.10 EXECUTIVE King (nap)		2.55 Solomon
1.45 Decoupage		3.25 Melody Maid

GOING: Good to Soft (Good in places).
High-handicap course. Pleasantly flat. Run-in of 200yd.
Course in: ADB, 10-11, 12-13, 14-15, 16-17, 18-19, 20-21, 22-23, 24-25, 26-27, 28-29, 30-31, 32-33, 34-35, 36-37, 38-39, 40-41, 42-43, 44-45, 46-47, 48-49, 50-51, 52-53, 54-55, 56-57, 58-59, 60-61, 62-63, 64-65, 66-67, 68-69, 70-71, 72-73, 74-75, 76-77, 78-79, 80-81, 82-83, 84-85, 86-87, 88-89, 90-91, 92-93, 94-95, 96-97, 98-99, 100-101, 102-103, 104-105, 106-107, 108-109, 110-111, 112-113, 114-115, 116-117, 118-119, 120-121, 122-123, 124-125, 126-127, 128-129, 130-131, 132-133, 134-135, 136-137, 138-139, 140-141, 142-143, 144-145, 146-147, 148-149, 150-151, 152-153, 154-155, 156-157, 158-159, 160-161, 162-163, 164-165, 166-167, 168-169, 170-171, 172-173, 174-175, 176-177, 178-179, 180-181, 182-183, 184-185, 186-187, 188-189, 190-191, 192-193, 194-195, 196-197, 198-199, 200-201, 202-203, 204-205, 206-207, 208-209, 210-211, 212-213, 214-215, 216-217, 218-219, 220-221, 222-223, 224-225, 226-227, 228-229, 230-231, 232-233, 234-235, 236-237, 238-239, 240-241, 242-243, 244-245, 246-247, 248-249, 250-251, 252-253, 254-255, 256-257, 258-259, 260-261, 262-263, 264-265, 266-267, 268-269, 270-271, 272-273, 274-275, 276-277, 278-279, 280-281, 282-283, 284-285, 286-287, 288-289, 290-291, 292-293, 294-295, 296-297, 298-299, 300-301, 302-303, 304-305, 306-307, 308-309, 310-311, 312-313, 314-315, 316-317, 318-319, 320-321, 322-323, 324-325, 326-327, 328-329, 330-331, 332-333, 334-335, 336-337, 338-339, 340-341, 342-343, 344-345, 346-347, 348-349, 350-351, 352-353, 354-355, 356-357, 358-359, 360-361, 362-363, 364-365, 366-367, 368-369, 370-371, 372-373, 374-375, 376-377, 378-379, 380-381, 382-383, 384-385, 386-387, 388-389, 390-391, 392-393, 394-395, 396-397, 398-399, 400-401, 402-403, 404-405, 406-407, 408-409, 410-411, 412-413, 414-415, 416-417, 418-419, 420-421, 422-423, 424-425, 426-427, 428-429, 430-431, 432-433, 434-435, 436-437, 438-439, 440-441, 442-443, 444-445, 446-447, 448-449, 450-451, 452-453, 454-455, 456-457, 458-459, 460-461, 462-463, 464-465, 466-467, 468-469, 470-471, 472-473, 474-475, 476-477, 478-479, 480-481, 482-483, 484-485, 486-487, 488-489, 490-491, 492-493, 494-495, 496-497, 498-499, 500-501, 502-503, 504-505, 506-507, 508-509, 510-511, 512-513, 514-515, 516-517, 518-519, 520-521, 522-523, 524-525, 526-527, 528-529, 530-531, 532-533, 534-535, 536-537, 538-539, 540-541, 542-543, 544-545, 546-547, 548-549, 550-551, 552-553, 554-555, 556-557, 558-559, 560-561, 562-563, 564-565, 566-567, 568-569, 570-571, 572-573, 574-575, 576-577, 578-579, 580-581, 582-583, 584-585, 586-587, 588-589, 590-591, 592-593, 594-595, 596-597, 598-599, 600-601, 602-603, 604-605, 606-607, 608-609, 610-611, 612-613, 614-615, 616-617, 618-619, 620-621, 622-623, 624-625, 626-627, 628-629, 630-631, 632-633, 634-635, 636-637, 638-639, 640-641, 642-643, 644-645, 646-647, 648-649, 650-651, 652-653, 654-655, 656-657, 658-659, 660-661, 662-663, 664-665, 666-667, 668-669, 670-671, 672-673, 674-675, 676-677, 678-679, 680-681, 682-683, 684-685, 686-687, 688-689, 690-691, 692-693, 694-695, 696-697, 698-699, 700-701, 702-703, 704-705, 706-707, 708-709, 710-711, 712-713, 714-715, 716-717, 718-719, 720-721, 722-723, 724-725, 726-727, 728-729, 730-731, 732-733, 734-735, 736-737, 738-739, 740-741, 742-743, 744-745, 746-747, 748-749, 750-751, 752-753, 754-755, 756-757, 758-759, 760-761, 762-763, 764-765, 766-767, 768-769, 770-771, 772-773, 774-775, 776-777, 778-779, 780-781, 782-783, 784-785, 786-787, 788-789, 790-791, 792-793, 794-795, 796-797, 798-799, 800-801, 802-803, 804-805, 806-807, 808-809, 810-811, 812-813, 814-815, 816-817, 818-819, 820-821, 822-823, 824-825, 826-827, 828-829, 830-831, 832-833, 834-835, 836-837, 838-839, 840-841, 842-843, 844-845, 846-847, 848-849, 850-851, 852-853, 854-855, 856-857, 858-859, 860-861, 862-863, 864-865, 866-867, 868-869, 870-871, 872-873, 874-875, 876-877, 878-879, 880-881, 882-883, 884-885, 886-887, 888-889, 890-891, 892-893, 894-895, 896-897, 898-899, 900-901, 902-903, 904-905, 906-907, 908-909, 910-911, 912-913, 914-915, 916-917, 918-919, 920-921, 922-923, 924-925, 926-927, 928-929, 930-931, 932-933, 934-935, 936-937, 938-939, 940-941, 942-943, 944-945, 946-947, 948-949, 950-951, 952-953, 954-955, 956-957, 958-959, 960-961, 962-963, 964-965, 966-967, 968-969, 970-971, 972-973, 974-975, 976-977, 978-979, 980-981, 982-983, 984-985, 986-987, 988-989, 990-991, 992-993, 994-995, 996-997, 998-999, 1000-1001, 1002-1003, 1004-1005, 1006-1007, 1008-1009, 1010-1011, 1012-1013, 1014-1015, 1016-1017, 1018-1019, 1020-1021, 1022-1023, 1024-1025, 1026-1027, 1028-1029, 1030-1031, 1032-1033, 1034-1035, 1036-1037, 1038-1039, 1040-1041, 1042-1043, 1044-1045, 1046-1047, 1048-1049, 1050-1051, 1052-1053, 1054-1055, 1056-1057, 1058-1059, 1060-1061, 1062-1063, 1064-1065, 1066-1067, 1068-1069, 1070-1071, 1072-1073, 1074-1075, 1076-1077, 1078-1079, 1080-1081, 1082-1083, 1084-1085, 1086-1087, 1088-1089, 1090-1091, 1092-1093, 1094-1095, 1096-1097, 1098-1099, 1100-1101, 1102-1103, 1104-1105, 1106-1107, 1108-1109, 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Football: Villa top of the class, Arsenal can do better, Manchester United must improve, Forest try on dunce's hat

Premiership half-term report

ARSENAL

ARSENE WENGER'S attempts to write off his team before anyone else does would be more convincing if Arsenal had not been 13 points behind Manchester United this time last year and still done the Double.

After a spluttering first half of the season, in which the Champions' League challenge was undermined by injuries and (largely unnecessary) suspensions, Sunday's performance against Leeds was a reminder of what can be achieved.

Emmanuel Petit and Patrick Vieira looked a formidable force again at the heart of the team, while Dennis Bergkamp and Marc Overmars seemed at last to have shrugged off the lethargy that has dogged them since the World Cup.

Doubts still surround the reserve strength, and allowing Ian Wright to leave last summer still looks a bad error. Another Champions' League place may depend on keeping a more settled side and greater discipline.
Star pupil: Emmanuel Petit.
Can do better: Dennis Bergkamp.

ASTON VILLA

BACK ON top of the Premiership following Monday's narrow victory at Charlton, Villa's season has to be seen as a glowing tribute to John Gregory's management skills. Considerable scepticism followed his appointment as Brian Little's successor last February, but Villa's record under his charge has been outstanding – 27 points from 11 Premiership matches last season, 36 from 18 during the current campaign.

Even the loss of Dwight Yorke has failed to disturb Villa's progress, the blow cushioned by the arrival of Paul Merson and Dion Dublin who, along with Alan Thompson, represent Gregory's three major buys. If there is a doubt over



Villa's championship credentials, it lies in their results so far against the other main contenders. Although they produced a storming comeback from 2-0 down to beat Arsenal, previous matches against Chelsea, Manchester United and Liverpool yielded only one point in total.
Star pupil: Gareth Barry.
Can do better: Stan Collymore.

BLACKBURN ROVERS

ROVERS HAVE already tried on the dunce's cap this term and, although now third from bottom, performances need to improve considerably if last-in-class is to be avoided come May.

Under Roy Hodgson, Rovers were looking to escape a visit from the Premiership's inspectors for failing clubs, but Brian Kidd – a great believer in lots of homework – has begun his first senior school headship with a victory and two draws.

The boy in the new blue blazer is Keith Gillespie, a £2.3m Newcastle graduate whose task is to provide under-achiever Kevin Davies, the sporadic Chris Sutton and the hard-working Nathan Blake with multiple choices



in front of goal. The defence need to improve their maths and realise that a large goal against column equals relegation.
Kidd has to work on attendance levels. Players marked 'absent' through injury or suspension (40 yellow and four red cards already) are a too familiar register entry.
Star pupil: Tim Sherwood.
Can do better: Kevin Davies.

CHARLTON ATHLETIC

WHEN CHARLTON topped the Premiership after two games, the local newspaper produced a cut-out-and-keep League table. The possibility that it may be the only thing to remember the season by has grown stronger in recent weeks as Alan Curbishley's braves have slipped closer to the sort of position most people had predicted.

Amid all the talk of a difficult start, getting Southampton for the second game proved a wonderful boost for the team, the crowd and (after a 5-0 win) the goal difference. Drawing at places like Newcastle, Arsenal, Liverpool and Tottenham confirmed the side's fighting qualities, but an inability to pick up points from winnable



home games meant they could not afford the recent run of away defeats. Failure to finish off some often impressive approach play has been a prime cause, with Clive Mendonca's unexpected lack of goals adding to the alarm. A new striker is a necessity.
Star pupil: Mark Kinsella.
Can do better: Clive Mendonca.

CHELSEA

REMAINING UNBEATEN since the opening day of the season at Coventry has given Chelsea an excellent chance of landing their first championship since Ron Greenwood was centre-half in 1955. Greenwood, whose all-English West Ham side won the FA Cup and Cup-Winners' Cup a decade later, might regret that not a single goal has been scored by an Englishman, but that is the route foreign coaches tend to take.

Only Manchester United can rival the depth of Gianluca Vialli's squad, which has not suffered from the loss of Brian Laudrup and Pierluigi Casiraghi – bringing in Bjørn Rasmussen for only £500,000 from Copenhagen as soon as



Laudrup went home to Denmark was a clever stroke. As long as Vialli understands the club's passion to win the title, and is prepared to sacrifice other competitions to do it if necessary, Chelsea may be able to take advantage of United's obsession with the European Cup.
Star pupil: Gianfranco Zola.
Can do better: Dennis Wise.

COVENTRY CITY

AFTER GETTING a sniff of Uefa Cup qualification last season, Coventry's record so far has been a massive disappointment to a board who have not been frightened to spend. Yet the quality of their football has not declined by much, which just goes to show how narrow is the difference between success and failure and why manager Gordon Strachan was so wary last season of looking beyond survival.

Losing top scorer Dion Dublin to Villa came as a body blow, but the combination of Noel Whelan and Darren Huckerby, supplied from the wing by Stephen Froggatt, remains a potent attack, and Gary McAllister is back to provide class in midfield.



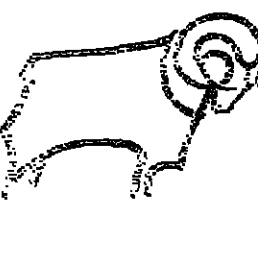
The underrated Roland Nilsson continues to impress at right wing-back. None the less, after only three wins in the last 12 Premiership matches, alarm bells will be ringing for Strachan, who may live to regret not curtailing the vacancy at Leeds with a little more vigour.
Star pupil: Roland Nilsson.
Can do better: Darren Huckerby.

DERBY COUNTY

FOR A while last season, Jim Smith's side looked inescapable, full of pace and intricate movement, a triple strike force of Dean Sturridge, Paulo Wanchope and Francesco Balzano making for many an exhilarating spectacle.

This season it is not really happening for them. Sturridge blows hot and cold and Balzano, formerly such a slippery opponent, is a pale shadow of last season's fans' favourite. Meanwhile, Wanchope's unpredictable eccentricities have not been quite so effective.

The arrival of Stefan Schnoor, Horacio Carbonari and Spencer Prior has brought added stability at the back, accounting for a record of only four defeats so far.

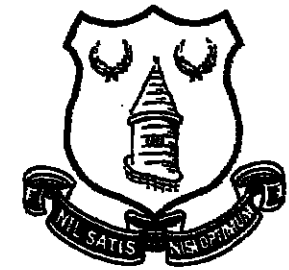


but nine draws reflect the lack of a consistent cutting edge, a problem Smith needs to resolve soon if Derby are to improve on last season's ninth place. None the less, only three seasons after moving up from the Nationwide, their future in the top flight looks secure.
Star pupil: Rory Delap.
Can do better: Francesco Balzano.

EVERTON

WHERE DO you start? Which is precisely the dilemma facing Bill Kenwright and any consortium wishing to buy the club off Peter Johnson. Years of mismanagement have reduced a great club into a dispirited and unhappy mess. The prospects? A struggle against relegation.

The problem facing Kenwright is money because Johnson will want at least £50m for his majority shareholding and when you take the club's debts and urgent future spending on the team into account the figure is close to double that. For a man who hoped to purchase the club for £5m five years ago, it is a huge financial leap. If that does not paint an optimistic picture, it is positively brilliant compared to watching the team.



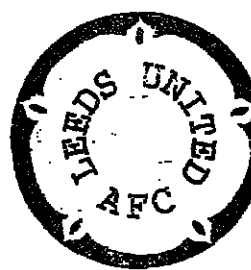
John Collins and Don Hutchison have been astute buys but someone who can score has to be added or bright prospects like Danny Cadamarteri and Michael Ball will become disillusioned.
Star pupil: Dave Watson.
Can do better: Nick Barmby.

LEEDS UNITED

FUNNY THING, managership. Three months ago Leeds supporters were mortified George Graham preferred White Hart Lane to Elland Road: now the outcry would be deafening if he returned to displace David O'Leary.

The sorcerer's apprentice has picked up the wand and converted a functional and hard-to-beat team into one that has accelerated the improvement and can now genuinely thrill. The team is too inexperienced to be a consistent title challenger this season, but in two years' time? How O'Leary spends the money and nurtures his young players will answer that question.

The Martyn-Radebe-Batty-Hasselbaink spine is rock



solid but another striker is urgently needed and more creativity and pace in midfield and greater strength in depth would not go amiss. The exciting thing is that Jonathon Woodgate, Stephen McPhail, Lee Bowyer, Harry Kewell and Alan Smith already look good enough for the Premiership.
Star pupil: Lucas Radebe.
Can do better: Clyde Wijnhard.

LEICESTER CITY

MARTIN O'NEILL continues to make silk purses from sow's ears, turning out a team that frequently appears greater than the sum of its parts. Could anyone else have rescued the career of Tony Cottee? After his drawn-out rejection of the chance to manage Leeds, one tends to conclude that the environment is one in which he thrives, engaged on the one hand in internal political warfare, on the other in defying the odds on the field, though he must be credited with being honourable, too.

This season, respectably high in the Premiership and eyeing up Wembley again in the Worthington Cup, Leices-



ter have much to be happy about, although the time will surely come when the temptation to sell Emile Heskey grows too large to resist. What is more, Neil Lennon and Muzzy Izet, the key components of O'Neill's industrious midfield, are also attracting covetous glances.
Star pupil: Neil Lennon.
Can do better: Graham Fenton.

LIVERPOOL

LOOK UP last year's report and merely change the date. Liverpool were potential trying to become substance at the end of 1997 and 12 months on they are further away from their target. The failure to buy a centre-half has gone beyond a mystery and is approaching a scandal, contributing more than anything to Roy Evans' departure. Excuses are not enough, money has to be spent, and there would be worse buys than Matt Elliott.

The full-backs are fallible. Paul Ince is a fading force and Steve McManaman should stop saying he wants to stay with the club and sign a contract. Either that or he should be put up for sale. The irritating thing about



Liverpool is they are tantalisingly close to being a very good side. They have the best two young strikers in the Premiership, Jamie Carragher and Jamie Redknapp could become an exciting core and Patrick Berger can sometimes look world class.
Star pupil: Michael Owen.
Can do better: Oyvind Leonhardsen, Jason McAteer, David James.

MANCHESTER UNITED

AS THE National Lottery puts it, maybe... just maybe. Qualification for the knockout phase of the European Cup was a minimum requirement and United are sufficiently well placed to make a fifth Premiership title in seven years a possibility, yet there are more buts surrounding United than for many seasons.

Most focus on the defence, which is shipping goals at an alarming rate. Jaap Stam is a commanding centre-half in search of a partner. Gary Neville is out of position and his brother Phil is having a crisis of confidence, so the sooner Ronny Johnsen and David May are properly fit the better.

Further forward the problem is an embarrassment of



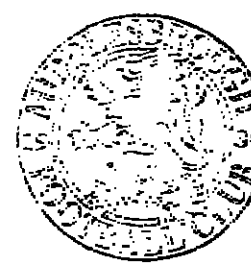
riches. Ole Gunnar Solskjær would walk into any team that did not also have Dwight Yorke and Andy Cole, while Nicky Butt must wonder what he has to do to get a regular place. The fundamental problem is a lack of height, which could undermine ambitions at home and abroad.
Star pupil: Andy Cole.
Can do better: Ryan Giggs.

MIDDLESBROUGH

AS MIDDLESBROUGH prepared to return to the top flight, it was suggested in these pages that the key to their fate would be Paul Gascoigne – if his world fell apart, so could Boro's.

It is a measure of the significant progress Middlesbrough have made that the travails of their shaven-headed midfielder have been merely incidental in the first half of the season. Boro have not just continued on their impressive, upwardly mobile course: they now have the bonus of the other side of the Gazza coin, a slimline, influential Gascoigne.

They are also promisingly placed to challenge for their first appearance in Europe, if



not their first title. They are unbeaten in 11 matches, have won at Old Trafford for the first time in 68 years and have 30 points in the bag already. Two years ago, at the same stage of their last Premiership campaign, they had 15. Middlesbrough, this time, are twice as good.
Star pupil: Andy Townsend.
Can do better: Mikkel Beck.

NEWCASTLE UNITED

TWO POINTS worse off than they were going into their half-way match last season, when they needed to win their final home game to avert the threat of relegation, Newcastle continue to look not so much a team as a collection of individuals. That collection is changing, with David Batty and Keith Gillespie in pastures new and Ruud Gullit starting to land his transfer targets. Newcastle could be on the up after Christmas.

Steve Howey's return to fitness and form has given Gullit's team a markedly more assured defensive look. They still remain short of creative nous in midfield and, despite some encouraging signs from Stephen Glass and Norberto Solano, could do with



two orthodox wingers to service Duncan Ferguson and Alan Shearer. United could also do with a little stability off the field. A major shareholder is looking to sell out and a manager commuting from a foreign country is not a recipe for long-term success.
Star pupil: Steve Howey.
Can do better: Andreas Andersson.

NOTTINGHAM FOREST

WITHOUT A win since August, Forest look doomed to follow the recent tradition of promoted Nationwide clubs failing to make the Premiership grade. Pierre van Hooijdonk's three-month strike certainly did not help matters, but equally to blame is the lack of investment over which the maverick Dutchman made his regrettable stand.

Having arrived to fanfare last year, the new owners have cleared Forest's debts but left them to fend in the Premiership with a First Division team. Few managers have a better record with under-funded clubs than Dave Bassett, but he has enjoyed only limited spending power and not used it noticeably well. Neil Shipperley



and Dougie Freedman in place of Van Hooijdonk and Kevin Campbell, for example, could hardly be described as like for like. If a buyer can be found for Van Hooijdonk, and the incoming cash used to good effect, there may still be a chance of survival, but even then only a slim one.
Star pupil: Thierry Bonalair.
Can do better: Pierre van Hooijdonk.

SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY

THE HEAD (as in case) boy has been absent and a permanent expulsion is looming if he does not turn up soon. The irony is that Wednesday's results have been far better in Paolo Di Canio's absence than they were when the mercurial Italian was proving he is one of the most skilful players in the Premiership.

The reasons are varied. Danny Wilson appeared more unsettled than was expected after his move down the A61 from Barnsley and took time to impress his methods, although he was not helped by absences due to injury. Di Canio's absence has given Benito Carbone an extended run. The theory was that two Italians made the team too lightweight and the



former was usually preferred to his compatriot, which meant Carbone played only intermittently. The difference that selection has made can be seen in his delightful goals and approach play. Too strong to go down, Wednesday could be an outside bet for the FA Cup.
Star pupil: Des Walker.
Can do better: Paolo Di Canio.

SOUTHAMPTON

UNTIL LAST season, when Dave Jones led Southampton to a finishing position of 12th, the Saints had followed a fairly consistent seasonal path – poor start, minor autumn rally, poor Christmas, scrappy spring and safety come May – for nearly a decade.

This year they're back in the mire and showing few signs yet of getting out. A welter of summer changes (Kevin Davies out, Mark Hughes, Stuart Ripley, David Howells, Hassan Kachoul all in) are partly responsible, as is the need for a couple of defenders and a proven attacker.

Throw injury problems into the mix (last Saturday saw 14 players under treatment) and it's not too hard



to see why Southampton are struggling. They have several experienced relegation scrappers (Matt Le Tissier chief among them) and young promise, especially striker James Beattie. They'll need both to perform consistently to stay up.
Star pupil: James Beattie.
Can do better: Take your pick, starting with Hughes.

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR

SINCE SUCCEEDING the hapless (some said hopeless) Christian Gross, George Graham has done enough to convince most Tottenham followers that it was worth biting the anti-Arsenal bullet. The possibility of fusing Arsenal's traditional discipline with Spurs' self-expression is a fascinating one, and David Ginola's subsequent efforts have suggested that Graham can pull it off.

He has not rushed off to market, restricting himself so far to strengthening the club's weakest position by the protracted signing of Ipswich's useful full-back Mauricio Taricco. Allan Nielsen, like Ginola, is clearly prepared to put himself out



for the manager and is the team's most improved player, ahead of Steffen Iversen (now unfortunately injured). Winning the Worthington Cup, as Spurs should, to guarantee a return into Europe, would ease any lingering discomfort over 'the Arsenal man'.
Star pupil: David Ginola.
Can do better: Ian Walker.

WEST HAM UNITED

STEADY PROGRESS culminated in breathless calls for an oxygen tent as West Ham's adventures reached the uncharted heights of second place at the end of last month. Subsequent defeats at Leeds and Middlesbrough have brought everyone back down to earth.

Generally the defence has been solid, with Ian Pearce and Rio Ferdinand excellent in front of the impressive Shaka Hislop. The midfield has shone brightly on occasions, but John Hartson's return of three goals in 15 games means that the renewed partnership with Ian Wright has not taken off. Hartson's spat with Eyal Berkovic was one of several



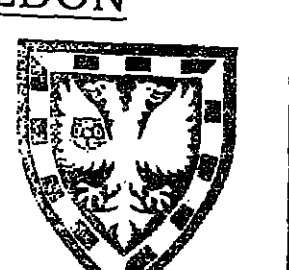
worrying events off the field, often poorly handled; others included the sale of Andy Impey to Leicester behind the back of manager Harry Redknapp, who has now admitted how difficult it will be to keep Ferdinand at the club. An important few months coming up.
Star pupil: Frank Lampard.
Can do better: John Hartson.

WIMBLEDON

THREE-NIL down in 27 minutes at West Ham early in September, Joe Kinnear's side proceeded to serve notice that the old Wimbledon spirit is still alive. The home team were overwhelmed, the game was won 4-3 and those who thought that relegation was on the cards at last were forced to seek out other, less indomitable, candidates.

Wimbledon have been in the top half of the table almost ever since, outgunned only by Manchester United (5-1) and Chelsea (3-0), taking revenge on the latter to reach the Worthington Cup semi-final.

The most significant factor has been a return to fitness of the strikers whose



absence caused a paucity of goals last spring. Marcus Gayle has been inching back towards the form of two seasons ago and Jason Euell has benefited from a new midfield role. If the long term is always imponderable, short-term prospects are bright again.
Star pupil: Michael Hughes.
Can do better: Carl Leaburn.

سكرا من الاربع

Ali's alchemy of the human spirit

IN DESCRIBING the scene of Cassius Clay's coronation on 25 February 1964 in Miami Beach, Florida, a distinguished American sports columnist, the late Red Smith, wrote: "Cassius Marcellus Clay fought his way out of the horde that swarmed and leaped and shouted in the ring, climbed like a squirrel on to the red velvet ropes and brandished his still-gloved hand aloft. 'Eat your words,' he howled to the working press rows. 'Eat your words.'"

Smith's words, the words of practically every reporter at ringside. Words that carried resentment of Clay's uniquely extravagant style, his brashness and obvious contempt for the racist convention that he should be grateful for a chance to rise above disenfranchisement.

At least Smith had the grace to add: "Nobody ever had a better right [to howl at the press]."

"In a mouth still dry from excitement of the most astounding upset in many roaring years, the words don't taste good, but they taste better than they read. The words written here, and practically everywhere else until the impossible became the unbelievable truth, said Sonny Liston would squash Cassius Clay like a bug."

BOOKS FOR CHRISTMAS

Today: Boxing

As David Remnick states in *The King of the World* (Random House), not the most comprehensive or revealing, but beyond doubt the most elegantly crafted book about Muhammad Ali (so far only available in the United States): "some of Clay's other detractors could barely bring themselves to admit that they had been so wrong about him."

"Dick Young's column for the [New York] *Daily News* seethed with resentment, as if the outcome had been a conspiracy designed specifically to offend him. 'If Cassius wants me to say he's the greatest, all right, I'll say it,' Young groused in print, 'but I'll say he scored the greatest retreating victory since Napoleon into a snow bank. I never saw Joe Louis run away and win, or Rocky Marciano, and I'm sure my father never saw Jack Dempsey run away and win, and my grandfather never saw John L. Sullivan run away and win.'"

American friends in this trade who think Remnick spends too much time putting down sportswriters of that era point out that Ali was a culture shock, a dramatic departure from the custom of one-dimensional fighters.

They miss not only the irony of Ali's lasting fame as a boxer but that of his subsequent passage from reviled draft-dodger and rabble-rouser to all-American hero.

As for allegiance to the Nation of Islam, his apparent acceptance of a philosophy that damned the white man as a devil, Remnick quotes Ali's ring doctor Ferdie Pacheco. "He's not a hater," Pacheco tells the author. "But he's always marched to his own drummer. He sees things as he wants to. Whatever is best for him, whatever ideology is best for him, whatever programme is best for the way he thinks his life should be."

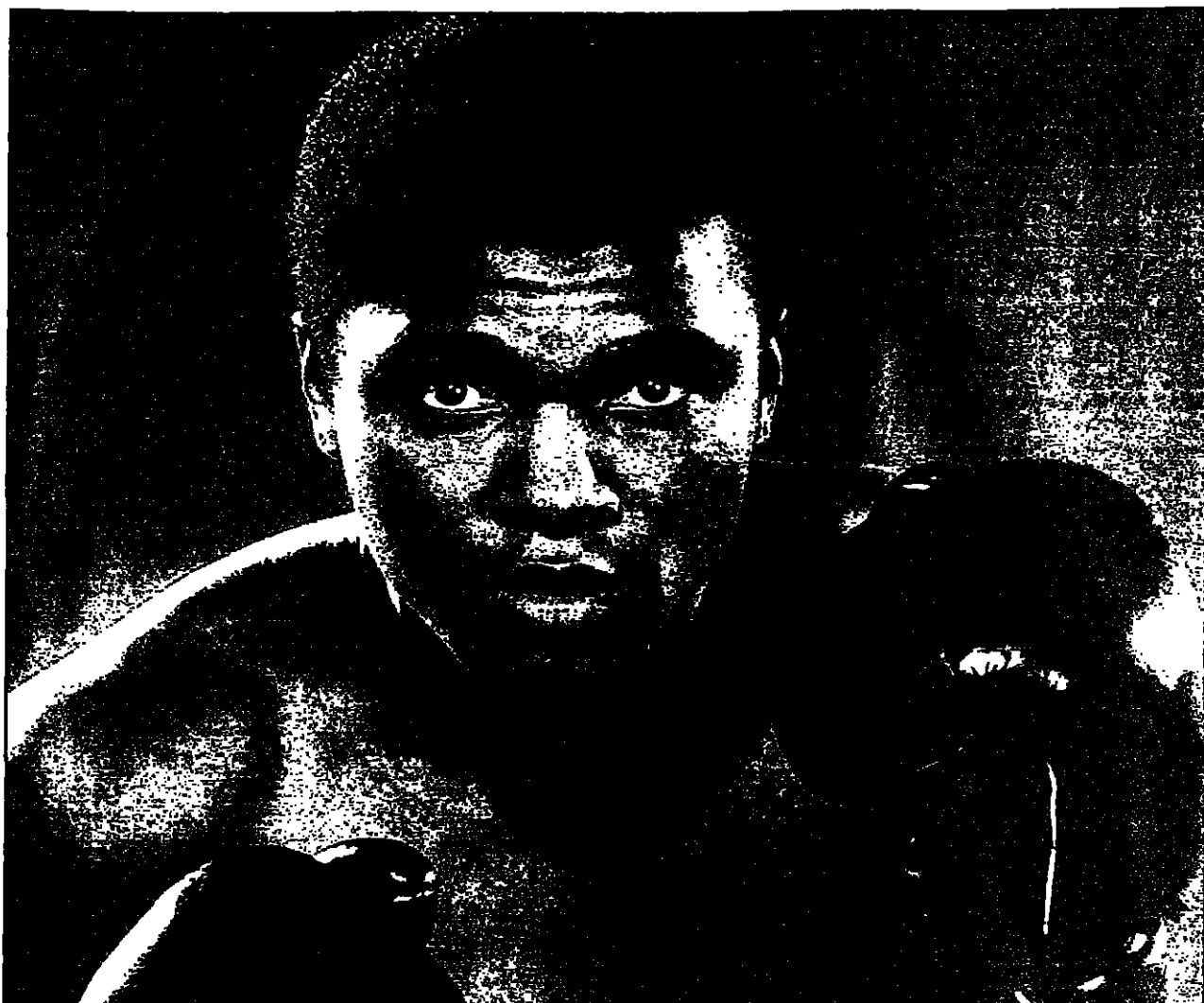
Ali treads slowly now, each careful step a measure of the difficulties inflicted by Parkinson's disease. But in Remnick's stylish prose there is resurrection. Although Ali is followed no further along the yellow brick road than his defeat of Floyd Patterson in November 1965 it is enough.

Editor of *New Yorker* magazine, Remnick won a Pulitzer Prize for *Lenin's Tomb: The fall of Communism*. With this penetrating study of events that announced Ali as the sports figure of the century and a symbol of black consciousness he lives up to his credentials.

Nobody on this side of the Atlantic who was assigned to charting Ali's progress got closer to him than the ITV boxing commentator Reg Gutteridge.

There are many anecdotes about their relationship in Gutteridge's entertaining autobiography *Uppercuts and Dazes* (John Blake Publishing, £16.99). When recovering in hospital from a serious illness Gutteridge woke up one evening to find Ali standing over him. Hearing in London that Gutteridge was unwell Ali insisted on seeing him at a late hour. His senses by then impaired, Ali placed a hand on Gutteridge's brow and mumbled a Muslim prayer.

It came as no surprise to boxing people when Naseem Hamed split with his Irish mentor Brendan Ingle. The turbulence that entered their relationship after Hamed became established as a major



Muhammad Ali was a culture shock but his fame is lasting - and not just because of his boxing

Curt Gunther

figure in the sport is vividly documented by Nick Pitt in *The Paddy and the Prince* (Random House, £16).

Considered by Gene Tunney to have possessed "the keenest and most analytical brain that

ever graced a prize ring", James J. Corbett caused a technical revolution in boxing when he defeated John L. Sullivan in 1892 to become the first heavyweight champion under Marquis of Queensberry rules.

The fascinating story of

Corbett's remarkable career in and out of the ring is well told by Patrick Myler in *Gentleman Jim Corbett - The Truth Behind a Boxing Legend* (Robson Books, £17.95).

KEN JONES

TEL: 0171 293 2222

APPOINTMENTS: GRADUATE, GENERAL, LEGAL

FAX: 0171 293 2505

SOCIAL SURVEY INTERVIEWERS

Are you looking for a job in which you get to meet people from a variety of backgrounds? If you are, the Social Survey Division of ONS has vacancies for interviewers in the following areas: Birmingham, Crawley, Liverpool, Manchester, Reading, Swindon, Teeside and all London Boroughs.

The work involves calling on people in their homes and collecting information on a variety of social issues on behalf of the Government by carrying out structured interviewing. The volume of work varies from week to week and most of the interviewing will take place in the evening.

Successful candidates will have a professional manner and excellent interpersonal skills. Own car and telephone are essential. The work is hourly paid at attractive rates plus expenses. Interviewers are required to be available for at least three days and three evenings per week. The retirement age is 65.

Send a postcard with your name, address and telephone number to SSD Recruitment & Training Unit, Office for National Statistics (D1/08), 1 Drummond Gate, London SW1V 2DQ.

Interviewing and training will take place throughout January and February.



ONS is an equal opportunities employer and welcomes applications from suitably qualified individuals, irrespective of racial origin, sex or disability. All applications will be treated on merit.

To advertise in this section please call the GRADUATE team on 0171 293 2546.

Cafe Indiya (UK) Ltd requires an Executive Chef and a 2nd Chef for its Indian restaurants. They should have at least five years work experience of which two years should be in a supervisory capacity. They should have a thorough working knowledge of regional Indian cuisine and should be able to train and lead a team. The company also requires a Restaurant Manager with at least five years restaurant managerial experience of which two years should be in a reputed hotel or restaurant. The person should have a good knowledge of regional Indian cuisine and possess good 'Customer Relations' skills. Successful applicants will be offered a good remuneration package. Please apply with full CV to: Mr Vilas Palnitkar, Operations Director, Cafe Indiya Restaurant, 30 Alie Street, London E1 8DA.

Santa Fe Ltd will be opening its first restaurant in London in April 1999, with further openings planned later in the year. We are seeking chefs with extensive experience in the preparation and production of the cuisine of the Southwestern region of the USA (Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, California and Texas). As a successful candidate you will have 5 years experience of this cuisine, with at least 2 years experience in a supervisory capacity. You will have the ability to recruit and train kitchen staff of all levels and demonstrate strong leadership and teamwork skills. You will be able to manage all aspects of the kitchen and show a sound understanding of food cost management. You will also have the experience to drive ongoing recipe and menu development. Benefits to include salary of circa £25k pa, bonus/incentive scheme, career progression and the opportunity to be part of an exciting new venture. Please write with CV to: Eileen Carlsen, Santa Fe Ltd, Pippa Grove, 228 London Road, Slough, Berks SL3 9QA.

IMPERIAL COLLEGE OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & MEDICINE
T.H. Huxley School of Environment, Earth Sciences and Engineering
Research Assistant
(RA1B £17,869 - £19,704 pa inc)
Applications are invited from electrical engineers for a postgraduate research position in the application of pulsating power in mineral technology. Please apply by CV and reference to: Professor U. Andrews, T.H. Huxley School of Environment, Earth Sciences and Engineering, London SW7 2BP. Fax/Tel: +44 171 594 7421. E-mail: u.andrews@ic.ac.uk. Closing date: 29 January 1999. The College is striving towards Equal Opportunities.

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE Department of Chemistry Post Doctoral Research Associate

A post-doctoral position is available from March 1999 for one year in the research group of Dr David Klenerman and Dr Shankar Balasubramanian, involving the labelling of biological molecules, such as proteins and DNA, with fluorophores for experiments using ultra-sensitive fluorescence spectroscopy to follow molecular dynamics. Previous experience of labelling techniques is essential.

The appointment will be on the University's standard scale in the range £15,735 to £21,815, according to age and experience. Applications (in duplicate) including a CV and the names and addresses of two referees should be sent to: Dr David Klenerman, Department of Chemistry, Lensfield Road, Cambridge CB2 1EW. Email: dk1001@cam.ac.uk. To arrive not later than 18th January 1999.

The University is an equal opportunities employer.

FINANCE

Expanding investment firm requires a graduate with at least three years experience dealing equity derivatives. Knowledge of US, UK and Far East markets are essential. Must have outstanding quantitative and analytical skills. Strong PC/systems skills will include spreadsheet development on Excel. Derivatives risk and credit knowledge a must. Foreign languages a plus. Salary negotiable. Contact box number P.O. Box 12953, The Independent Newspaper, One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5AP. Please send all inquiries to:

Ms Stella Wollin
46 Albemarle Street,
London W1X 3FE

ACCOMMODATION LIAISON OFFICER

JOINT SERVICE LIAISON OFFICE, BRITISH FORCES GERMANY

The main function of the Joint Service Liaison Office (JSLO) is liaison between the British Forces in Germany (BFG) and the German Authorities at Federal, Land and local levels, in accordance with mutual obligations arising from International Agreements.

The Accommodation Liaison Officer 1 (LO1) post is located in Bonn, Germany and is graded at Senior Executive Officer level. The key duties of the post are:

Assisting and advising BFG on the application of NATO Status of Forces Agreement and Supplementary Agreement, German political, legal and procedural matters relating to the acquisition and release of accommodation, planning/construction and environmental protection on BFG administered property.

Liaison with other NATO Sending States Forces on accommodation matters, construction and environmental issues.

Initiating, monitoring progress and negotiating/liaising with the Federal German authorities on accommodation, construction and environmental matters.

Leading and motivating a small bi-lingual executive/administrative team concerned with the task of international liaison.

Experience and Professional Competence required: Good current working knowledge of BFG together with German political and administrative systems is fundamental.

10 years' experience of negotiating in a German/International environment is essential.

Technical fluency in English and German to CSC Interpreter level 1 or H or Institute of Linguists Diploma in Public Service Interpreting or tested commercial equivalent above degree level is essential.

The starting salary for the position of LO1 will be £21,273 pa with the potential for performance related increases. A Recruitment and Retention Allowance of £1,776 pa will be payable. Applicants domiciled in the UK will also receive a non-taxable Cost of Living Addition (COLA), which ranges from £4,030 to £7,280 depending on marital status. COLA is variable and subject to adjustment to reflect changes in the assessed cost of living in Germany. Additional COLA is payable for any dependent children. Free accommodation and utilities within agreed levels are also available. Local schooling or Boarding School Allowance is provided, where required.

The post is reserved for UK Nationals only, and is a fixed term three year contract, although there is a good possibility of extension to 5 years. Exceptionally, posts may be made permanent.

For an information pack and application form, please call 00 49 2161 473451 or write to PM1b Civil Secretariat, HQ UKSC(G), BFPO 140. Alternatively you can request the information pack by fax on 00 49 2161 472220. The closing date for applications is 15 January 1999.

We are an equal opportunity employer and are fully committed to equal opportunity policies. The Ministry of Defence positively welcomes applications from suitably qualified individuals, irrespective of racial origin, sex or disability.



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

RPS Rainer has a 300 year history of making a significant contribution to social and penal policy affecting children, young people and offenders. Further it has an outstanding track record of providing innovative direct services and pioneering new work. There are many aspects of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the Government's Response to the Children's Safeguards Review and Quality Protects Programme, published by The Department of Health in November 1998. RPS Rainer has made a strategic decision to respond as lead player to this agenda in three specific areas which make up its core business:

Care Leavers and After Care
Resocial Management and Bail Support
Monitoring Developments

In order to establish our response to these agendas, we require a:

HEAD OF DEVELOPMENT

£35K - Two year contract

The successful applicant will work with strategic partners, local authorities and central government, providing project development and management, consultancy, training and service planning.

Candidates are likely to be educated to graduate level, with at least five years in a senior post, a proven track record of strategic development, project planning and management, and the ability to secure ESF and other statutory funding.

For an application form and information pack, please send a large A4 stamped, addressed envelope (60p in stamps) to:

Gina Short, Human Resources Officer,
RPS Rainer, Rectory Lodge, High Street,
Brasted, Kent TN16 1JF

The Royal Philanthropic Society incorporating The Rainer Foundation is committed to Equal Opportunities Practice
Charity Registration No. 225132

Together we'll make the difference

A leading charity committed to giving young people at risk the chance to fulfil their potential in society



Coventry Panahghar is a registered charity which provides emergency temporary accommodation and range of direct support services to Asian women and children experiencing domestic violence.

We are seeking to recruit highly motivated, enthusiastic and committed Asian women for the following posts:

CHILDCARE PROJECT OFFICER (Ref: CPO)

Full-time (NO6 £16,233)

Your role will involve developing childcare provision and initiatives, and the day-to-day running of full daycare creche.

You will need:

- NNEB or equivalent qualification
- Four years post qualifying experience with 0-8yr olds.
- Empathy and understanding of the concerns and problems facing Asian children and families.

This post is funded through the Single Regeneration Budget, initially for two years.



REFUGEE PROJECT OFFICER (Ref: RPO)

Full-time (RM1W £15,264-£19,185, night call-out rate £9.00ph)

This is a new project, based in Leicester, for women aged between 16-25yrs. You will be required to manage the 24 hour running of our refuge.

You will need:

- At least 2 years management experience.
- At least 3 years experience working with women and children in a caring enabling capacity.
- A thorough knowledge of domestic violence as it affects young women within the Asian communities.
- Highly developed leadership, organisational and communication skills.
- A relevant qualification i.e. Degree in Social Work/Social Care, CQSW, DipSW or equivalents.
- Flexibility as 10% of working time will be at weekends and required to be on call during the night.

PROJECT SUPPORT WORKERS- LEICESTER BASED (Ref: PSW/Night - PSW/Day)

3 part-time posts 19.5 hours

Grade RW1 £13,086 pro-rata (£2,340 weighting for night support posts.)

Two Support Workers are required to work part of the week and overnight (3 nights per week) and one Support Worker during the day

You will need to have:

- The capacity to offer a range of emotional and practical support, with an empathic and sensitive approach.
- The ability to liaise with a range of agencies such as social services, housing benefit agency, courts, police, schools and alcohol, drugs and mental health services.
- At least one years experience of working with Asian women, children and young girls either in a paid or unpaid capacity.

Ability to speak an Asian language is essential for all posts. Speakers of Gujarati and Bengali are particularly welcome due to under-representation. The above posts are exempt under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 7(2)(d)(e) and the Race Relations Act 1976 S2(d).

For application forms please call 01203 228952 and quote relevant reference. Closing date for all posts is 11th January 1999.

Panahghar is Committed to Equality of Opportunity.

SPECIAL OFFER for TRAINING

- Intensive Courses for Quick Results
- In-House Recruitment Agency
- Speeds and Skills Guaranteed

- Microsoft Office 97 Beginners - Advanced Email-Type 40 wpm in 3 wks
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SPORTING QUIZ OF THE YEAR

TROUBLED TIMES

- 1 Who got into trouble for saying that playing conditions were such that "I felt like I had smoked 10 joints"?
- 2 Who saw red in his national stadium but returned less than four weeks later to inspire his country to a historic triumph?
- 3 Who was sent home from France after claiming that some of his colleagues had become "untouchables"?
- 4 Who whistled up a storm by pretending to play a flute?
- 5 Who collected his 12th and 13th yellow cards and his first red in his 44th England match?

RECORD BREAKERS

- 1 Who needed only 574 attempts to become one of the 24 men of the century?
- 2 ...and who needed 38 attempts to achieve his century landmark?
- 3 Whose elevation in March was the quickest in 110 years of history?
- 4 Which South African No 10 performed a feat equalled only by an Englishman in 1884 and an Australian in 1902?
- 5 Who got into double figures for the first time in his England career at the age of 32?

THE WEMBLEY WAY

- 1 On what occasion did no Englishman feature in a match at Wembley which saw one team reach a half-century and their opponents fail to score?
- 2 Who earned a place at Wembley thanks to a strike by a Librarian?
- 3 Which Wembley final ended with a British coach guiding a team to victory for the first time since 1986?
- 4 When was an 18-year-old Englishman upstaged at Wembley by a 23-year-old Chilean?
- 5 Which Italian helped his side lift a trophy by scoring at Wembley for the second time in 10 months?

WINNERS AND LOSERS

- 1 Whose limited talent earned them two trophies in the space of 24 hours?
- 2 Who scored the goal which brought back to London a trophy which his club had last won 27 years ago?
- 3 Who took 26 seconds off the record for an annual race over four miles and 374 yards?
- 4 Which Englishman triumphed at English Turf to record his first victory at only his eighth attempt?
- 5 When did a Tankard fall in a cup?

GROUNDS FOR DEBATE

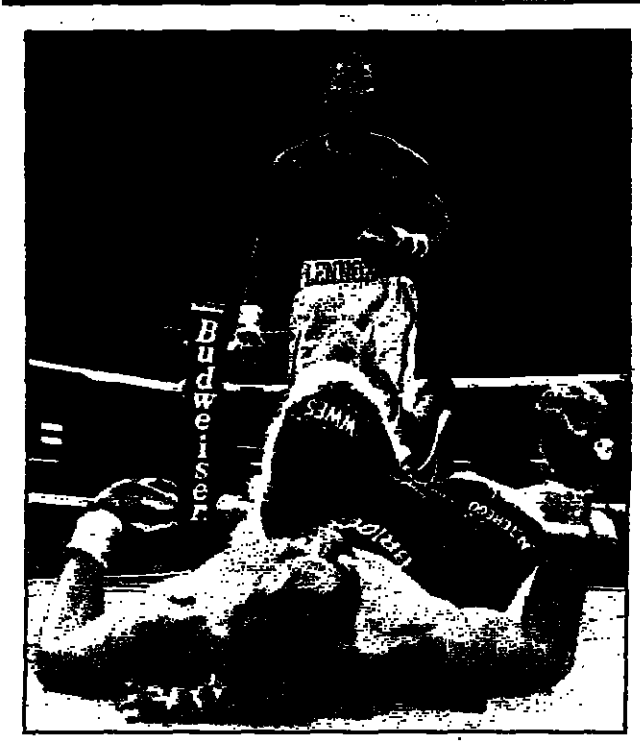
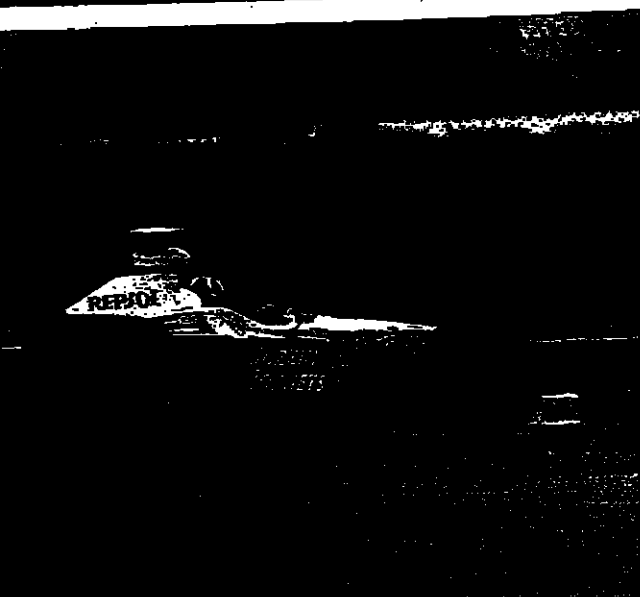
- 1 Who headed west after leaving a ground where rugby had been played for more than 130 years?
- 2 ...and who left a ground which had staged rugby for 112 years to move in with footballing neighbours who promptly won their championship and promotion?
- 3 Who moved from their inner-city home to a £270m stadium built on a chemically polluted former gas-works site?
- 4 Why was there a chorus of "Vialli, Vialli" during a match at Goodison Park when Chelsea were playing at Stamford Bridge?
- 5 Who failed to win at home until the ninth month of the season?

FAME FOR 15 MINUTES

Why did the following make the headlines?

- 1 Simon Fenn
- 2 Leyton Hewitt
- 3 Giuliano Grazzoli
- 4 Sean Olsson
- 5 Steve Simonsen

WHERE WERE THESE PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN?



END OF THE LINE

- 1 Who finally won gold after a sequence of 13 silvers or bronzes?
- 2 Who prevented a world record by succeeding where 17 teams before them had failed?
- 3 Which player paid the final penalty for failing at the 14th attempt after 13 successes?
- 4 Who enjoyed double delight after ending a run of 37 international matches without a goal?
- 5 Whose major run ended after 37 years and 146 consecutive appearances?

GOLDEN OLDIES

- 1 Which Czech went Down Under to break his duck at the age of 30?
- 2 Which 31-year-old kept his bottle in Bordeaux to kick his team to a famous victory?
- 3 ...and which Australian retired after kicking his team to final glory?

- 6 ...and whose run ended after 2,632 consecutive returns to base dating back to 1982?
- 7 Which player from Belarus finally beat her German opponent after 17 unsuccessful attempts?
- 8 Who cheered hearts by ending a 36-year wait for a trophy?
- 9 Whose run of 63 consecutive appearances was ended by a bad back?
- 10 Whose nine-year winning run ended when a Swede and a Norwegian scored goals for a rival firm?

- 4 Which 37-year-old bucked his own previous form in the event to inspire his team to one of the biggest upsets in his sport's history in San Diego?
- 5 Which American achieved finally major success at the age of 41?

THE GLOBAL GAME

- 1 What run dating back over 18 years did the Irishman Denis Hickie end in Paris?
- 2 Who was the 28-year-old farmer's daughter from Cavan who recorded Ireland's first success in London?
- 3 What began in Thailand in January and visited Australia, South Africa, Scotland and Dubai before finishing the year in November in Spain?
- 4 Which three Britons took less than 21 seconds to clean up in Budapest?
- 5 At which Test match did no more wickets fall after three went down in the first hour?
- 6 Which 27-year-old became the first Frenchman to triumph in Surrey in June when he held off the

- challenge of a 42-year-old Ulsterman?
- 7 Which 22-year-old Scotsman conquered the world for the first time by beating an Irishman in Sheffield?
- 8 Why did more than 100 million television viewers watch live coverage of a First Division match in the Nationwide League in September?
- 9 Who spent three weeks racing over 3,711 kilometres to become the first Italian to triumph in Paris for 33 years?
- 10 Which American, born in Canada of English and German parents, gave up trying to conquer Australia, moved to Japan, and came within a stroke of conquering Britain?

WHO SAID IT?

- 1 "I'm going to feel every minute of it this time. I can't remember the last two so it's going to be very nice. We're going to show the French boys how to party."
- 2 "Coming from Tobago, which is such a small island where football comes second to cricket, it was a dream opportunity to play here."
- 3 "I don't care whether you're Alan Shearer or The Pope, you don't do things like that."
- 4 "I just felt in the early stages of the tournament he was not quite there mentally - but he is now."
- 5 "I went out on a limb for him. I tried so many times to make him see what he needed to do, at the age of 31, to deal with the modern game."
- 6 "He couldn't talk, but he didn't need to apologise. Everyone could see how he felt. The evidence is there for everyone, for him more than anybody, of how much it hurt him and the team."
- 7 "I was very nervous, to be honest. I was just trying to focus my mind, trying to stay cool, not to get excited, not to tire myself, not to worry. I knew I needed only to finish second to win the title, but that made me uncomfortable."
- 8 "I'm a bit of a jammy git. Tom Jenkins should have ridden him."
- 9 "Not going past Sir Don probably saved me from getting stabbed in the street. I reckon I get a minimum of 10 people a day coming up to me and kissing me and telling me how great it was I didn't go past him."
- 10 "He came up to me after the match to apologise, saying he was sorry that I had been sent off. I felt like punching him then."

ANSWERS, PAGE 14

FIXTURES

BOXING DAY

FOOTBALL

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP

- 1 Arsenal v West Ham (12.0)
- 2 Blackburn v Aston Villa (12.0)
- 3 Coventry v Tottenham (12.0)
- 4 Everton v Derby (12.0)
- 5 Manchester Utd v North Forest (12.0)
- 6 Newcastle v Liverpool (12.0)
- 7 Sheffield Wed v Leicester (12.0)
- 8 Southampton v Chelsea (12.0)
- 9 Wimbledon v Charlton (12.0)

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE

FIRST DIVISION

- 10 Birmingham v Sheffield Utd (12.0)
- 11 Bolton v Bradford (12.0)
- 12 Crewe v Bury (12.0)
- 13 Huddersfield v Grimsby (12.0)
- 14 Ipswich v Portsmouth (12.0)
- 15 Oxford Utd v Crystal Palace (12.0)
- 16 QPR v Norwich (12.0)
- 17 Stockport v Barnley (12.0)
- 18 Swindon v Wolves (12.0)
- 19 Tranmere v Sunderland (12.0)
- 20 Watford v Bristol City (12.0)
- 21 West Bromwich v Port Vale (12.0)

SECOND DIVISION

- 22 Blackpool v Wigan (12.0)
- 23 Bristol Rovers v Gillingham (12.0)
- 24 Chesterfield v Cheltenham (12.0)
- 25 Fulham v Colchester (12.0)
- 26 Lincoln City v Macclesfield (12.0)
- 27 Luton v Reading (12.0)
- 28 Millwall v Bournemouth (12.0)
- 29 Notts County v Northampton (12.0)
- 30 Stoke v Preston (12.0)
- 31 Walsall v Wycombe (12.0)
- 32 Wrexham v Mansfield (12.0)
- 33 York v Burnley (12.0)

THIRD DIVISION

- 34 Barnet v Plymouth (12.0)
- 35 Brighton v Brentford (12.0)
- 36 Cambridge Utd v Rochester (12.0)
- 37 Cardiff v Shrewsbury (12.0)
- 38 Exeter v Torquay (12.0)
- 39 Hull Ake v Darlington (12.0)
- 40 Hull B v Chester (12.0)
- 41 Leyton Orient v Swindon (12.0)

FOOTBALL

SCOTTISH PREMIER LEAGUE

- 40 Dundee v Aberdeen (12.0)
- 41 Kilmarnock v Hearts (12.0)
- 42 Motherwell v Dundee Utd (12.0)
- 43 Rangers v St Johnstone (12.0)
- 44 Albion v Raith (12.0)
- 45 Falkirk v Stirling (12.0)
- 46 Greenock Morton v Clydebank (12.0)
- 47 Hamilton v St Mirren (12.0)
- 48 Hibernian v Ayr (12.0)

SCOTTISH SECOND DIVISION

- 49 Alloa v Stirling (12.0)
- 50 Arbroath v Forfar (12.0)
- 51 Clyde v Partick (12.0)
- 52 Albion v Queen's Park (12.0)
- 53 Brechin v Montrose (12.0)
- 54 Dumbarton v Berwick (12.0)
- 55 Ross County v Cowdenbeath (12.0)
- 56 Stenhousemuir v East Stirling (12.0)

SCOTTISH THIRD DIVISION

- 57 Albion v Queen's Park (12.0)
- 58 Brechin v Montrose (12.0)
- 59 Dumbarton v Berwick (12.0)
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FOOTBALL CONFERENCE

- 62 Doncaster v Leek (12.0)
- 63 Farnborough v Hayes (12.0)
- 64 Forest Green v Yeovil (12.0)
- 65 Kettering v Hednesford (12.0)
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Hall adamant that Newcastle is not for sale

THE OWNER of the Newcastle Falcons, Sir John Hall, last night dismissed speculation that he was planning to sell his 76 per cent stake in the club. As the reigning champions prepared for their Christmas campaign, their straight talking proprietor was explaining why the club was not up for sale.

"This coming year is going to be a watershed in the professional game," explained Sir John. "because it is when we expect the European Commission judgment which will give us the right to organise ourselves within the Rugby

RUGBY UNION
BY DAVID LLEWELLYN

Football Union as professional clubs.

"These rights will allow us to own television broadcasting and commercial deals. And the International Rugby Board would have to recognise that they are not above European law. There is nothing in this talk of selling the club. I have fought this battle for the last three years, it would be a nonsense to pull out now."

Newcastle are, however, in

danger of dropping out of title contention. They are six points adrift of the leaders, Leicester, which is likely to be eighth by the time they trot out for Sunday's home match against All Saints. Newcastle's bottom-but-one position on Boxing Day.

"We are saying that this League is open," said their coach, Steve Bates. "We are not out of the hunt and in some ways we are more threatening than last year."

They will have to threaten without Gary Armstrong, the

Scotland international scrum-half, for the next few weeks after he chipped a bone in a thumb. Without him and understudy Allen Chilton (two cracked fingers), it looked as if Bates might have to dust off his boots and turn out, but at yesterday's training session Hall Charlton, an England Schools 18 Group player last season, lined up with the first-choice players and looks a good bet to start his first Premiership match. He was on the bench for the Anglo-Welsh game against Cardiff last month.

Leicester, still without the

injured Joel Stranksy and Will Greenwood, field an unchanged team for only the second time this season. They will be very wary of Bedford, who, under the joint guidance of the recently departed Geoff Cooke and Paul Turner, gave the Tigers a real scare early in the season on their own patch.

"They were not easy as we found down there," admitted Dean Richards, Leicester's team manager. "In fact they probably deserved to win that one."

"They countered well and played some expansive rugby,

we only won with a try late in injury time."

The Tigers should be a different proposition in front of a full house at Welford Road. But Richards is cautious and probably with good cause. "We are happy to be top," he said, "but our form before the month of internationals was far better than it is now. We have had a lot of injuries as well over the last few weeks, but we have come through it winning our last two without Joel and Will."

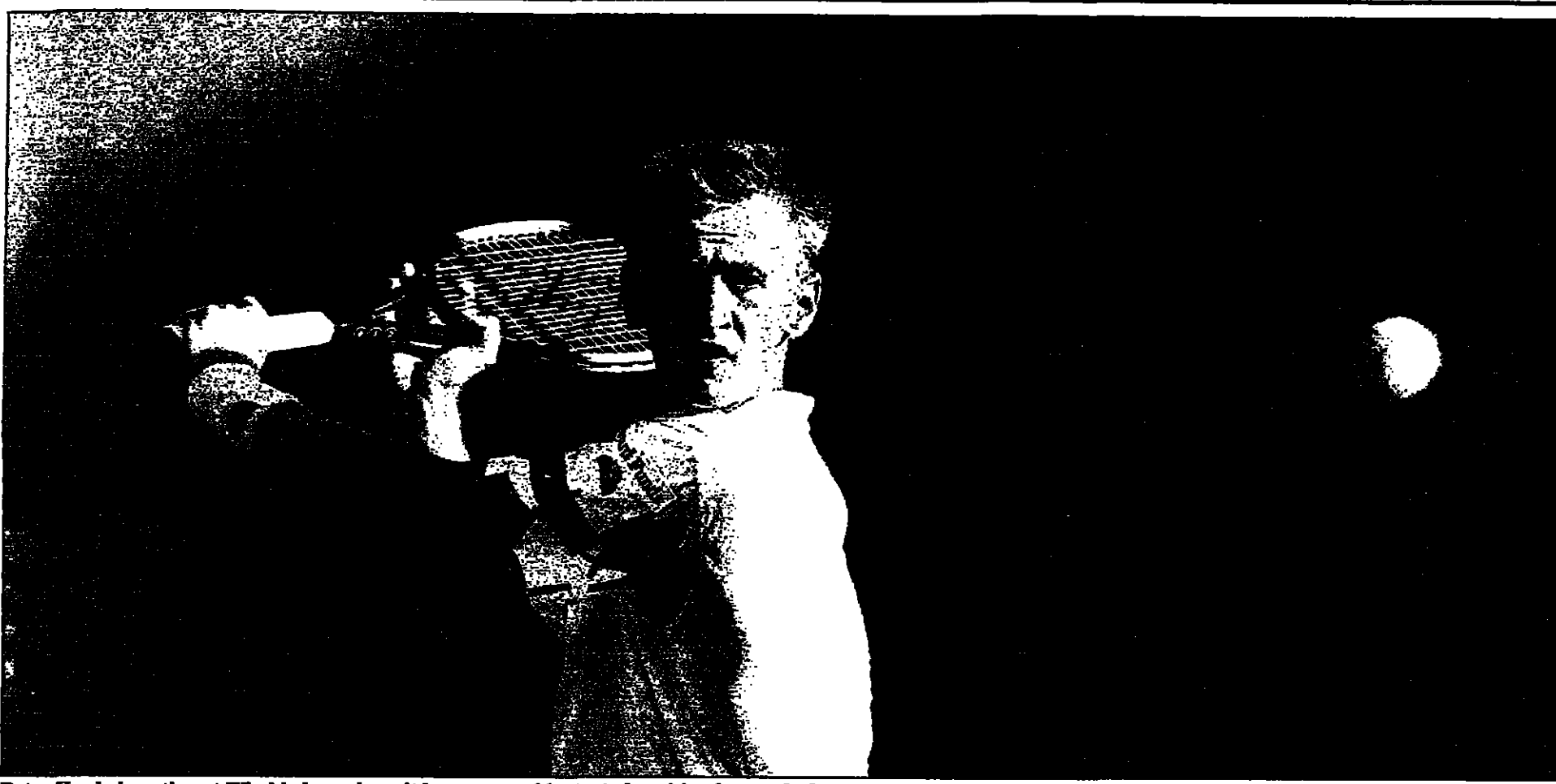
Much of that can be put down to the form of Tim Stimpson with the boot. The full-back

landed match-clinching goals against Newcastle a couple of weeks ago and followed that up with six penalties to sort out the close-fought Kingsholm contest last weekend.

At least Bedford will have the services of Jason Forster, their dynamic Wales A flanker. The player said yesterday that his proposed transfer to Pontypridd was definitely off. Forster, who is contracted to Bedford until May, has a verbal agreement with Rudi Straeul, the club's director of rugby, which would allow him to go if a club came in for him.

"My wife and son are living in Newport," explained Forster. "Having played for Wales A against Argentina I am keen to press my claim for a place in the full squad."

In Reading on Boxing Day Richmond take on a revitalised and dangerous London Irish, who ran them close in October. Richmond are still without their captain and No 8 Ben Clarke (fractured cheekbone), and the Wales lock, Craig Quinnett, is a doubt. The Exiles field the side which ended an impressive six-match unbeaten run by Harlequins last week.



Petr Korda in action at Wimbledon, where it has emerged he tested positive for nandrolone, a substance which can speed recovery from injury

Korda's innocence disputed

EXPERT OPINION was divided yesterday as to whether Petr Korda, who tested positive for steroids during this year's Wimbledon, could have taken the drug innocently.

The 30-year-old Czech, who is the reigning Australian Open champion, was stripped of the rankings points and prize money he earned by reaching the Wimbledon quarter-finals, but avoided suspension because he denied taking the drug, nandrolone, knowingly.

"I wish to state categorically that I am not a drugs cheat and would never seek to obtain a competitive advantage over my fellow professionals by such means," he said. "I am delighted that the committee has vindicated me."

TENNIS
BY KIERAN DALEY

Dr Joe Doust, a physiologist at the Department of Sports Science in Brighton, said: "It's certainly possible he could have taken the drug without knowing. There are two ways of administering it, by injection or tablet. It's perfectly reasonable he would not know what he's taking. It's surprising how many sportsmen these days just do what they're told."

He added: "I think what happened in the Tour de France this summer shows that whatever the spiel by sports medical teams, they are the people behind doping when it happens, not the athletes."

Doust added that Korda was probably given the steroid not over a long period to build muscle bulk, but to hasten recovery from injury and allow him to train harder.

In Australia, where Korda is due to defend his Australian Open title next month, experts were less ready to accept Korda's story.

Vicki Kapernick, a spokesperson for the Australian Sports Drug Agency, said nandrolone was an artificial version of the hormone testosterone which can only be injected. "It has a performance-enhancing effect and helps in muscle-building and recovery from injury while training," she said.

A sports medicine practitioner, Dr Peter Larkins, said he

found it hard to believe that Korda had not known what substance he had taken.

"How often have we heard the story: 'I didn't know where it came from'?" Larkins said. "Elite athletes have a lot of people wanting to help them and there is a lot of shady advice around. Maybe he could have been that naïve. It just doesn't gel with me, that he didn't know what it was, especially at that level. That wouldn't get you a defence in the eyes of the International Olympic Committee."

The Australian Open tournament director, Paul McNamee, said Korda had been given the absolute minimum penalty.

"He might have been given a cocktail of some sort in an injection and not been told exactly

what was in it," McNamee said. "But it is generally not an excuse if you didn't know, it's part of the fabric of any sport and players have got to be vigilant."

The Korda affair comes as the International Tennis Federation prepares to cast its vote for a unified anti-doping programme for sport.

The ITF will be represented at an anti-doping conference organised by the IOC on 2 February next year, while Brian Tobin, the ITF president, attended an IOC working session on the subject in Lausanne on 27 November. "The main difference in the proposed policy," Tobin said, "is that the minimum penalty for hard substances - higher-class substances - would be a minimum of two years' sus-

pension. Minor substances, social drugs and so on, would still be three months."

"A clause was added on the day that said any sport not adhering to this unified policy would not be able to participate in the Olympics. I had to discuss that with our partners [the men's and women's professional tours]. Having spoken to them, I don't see any problem at all, and I'm sure we'll be supporting the unified programme."

"Tennis has the most complete anti-doping policy of any sport, because it covers all of the professional areas, the Women's Tennis Association, the Association of Tennis Professionals' Tour, the ITF, and even our junior areas. We're dead against cheats in tennis."

Banks attacked over new post

AS TESSA SANDERSON joined the English Sports Council yesterday, the Sports Minister, Tessa Jowell, was accused of sexual discrimination for his apparent determination to appoint a woman to lead the Council.

The 1984 Olympic javelin champion, who campaigns for the Labour Party, was appointed yesterday by Chris Smith, the Secretary of State at the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, along with Bridget Simmonds, chief executive of Business in Sport and Leisure.

The appointments were overshadowed, though, by the allegations against Banks and Smith. The pair have rejected the recommendations of a selection panel saying that the £20,000-a-year, part-time chairmanship, should be a choice between the acting chairman, Trevor Brooking, and the for-

SPORTS POLITICS
BY ALAN HUBBARD

mer world karate champion, Geoff Thompson.

These were the two men on a five-person shortlist with three women - Sanderson, Simmonds and the former netball international, Sue Campbell, of the Youth Sports Trust. An announcement about the vacant post was due two weeks ago, but instead it is to be re-advertised. Brooking has been asked to continue as interim chairman.

Thompson claimed yesterday he was a victim of "girl power gone mad". Thompson, 40, who is black, said: "In an age of political correctness it seems I may be the right colour but the wrong sex. In the past I've been excluded by social and

ethnic identity but now it is because of gender."

The fact that Banks and Smith have declined to accept the recommendation of the panel chaired by the former Test cricketer, Raman Subba Row, has angered several leading figures in sport. It is believed that Banks wanted to appoint Sanderson, 42, despite her lack of experience in sport administration, seeing her as an ideal figurehead in his campaign to secure recognition for minority groups in sport.

Richard Spring, the Opposition sport spokesman, condemned the decision to shelve the appointment. "This is absolutely symbolic and typical of the way the department is handling sport. English sport deserves the best person to run it and the appointment should be made solely on merit."

Sailor's Boxing Day pay-day

THERE WILL be more of a flavour of Christmas past than Christmas future as four Yorkshire clubs cling to the last sprigs of tradition by playing on Boxing Day.

The biggest holiday derby of them all has bitten the dust this year, having been reduced to farce when St Helens fielded a reserve side against Wigan last Christmas. At most other clubs as well, coaches and players have got their way and left the deep mid-winter well alone.

Leeds, who host Halifax on Boxing Day morning, have special reasons for bucking the trend. They need to get some value for money out of Wendell Sailor, who, thanks to the machinations of the rugby union authorities, is being paid for two rugby league friendlies but not for his regular appearances for Leeds Tykes.

RUGBY LEAGUE
BY DAVE HADFIELD

The Brisbane Broncos and Australia winger admits - at least when talking to league people - that he has not been particularly stimulated by his experience of rugby union. He can be expected to return to his code of choice with a sharpened appetite on Saturday.

Of greater long-term significance are the debuts of two players who, unlike Sailor, will figure in Leeds' Super League campaign. The former Great Britain hooker, Lee Jackson, will make his first appearance since arriving from Newcastle Knights.

The hugely promising Karl Pratt, signed from Featherstone this winter, will also make his bow. Although he played on the wing for Rovers last season,

his aspirations are as a high-class stand-off. He is likely to play in both roles on Saturday, although it is intriguing to see him listed to start at stand-off.

Another player with a dazzling future in prospect, Kevin Sinfield, is at loose forward, with four other members of Leeds' all-conquering Academy team among the substitutes.

Halifax have newcomers of their own, notably the utility back, Graham Holroyd, signed from Leeds. The match, and the one between Castleford and Featherstone kicking off at the same time, will be the first played under the new rules agreed by the game's international federation. That will mean reverting to the non-scoring side kicking off and rewarding long-range touch-kicking by giving the kicking side the feed at the subsequent scrum.

SPORTING DIGEST	
ATHLETICS The winner of this year's London and Amsterdam marathons, Catherine McKiernan, will not be defending her Bupa Great North Cross-Country title on 2 January because of injury.	BOXING WORLD BOXING ASSOCIATION SUPER-FLYWEIGHT TITLE (Nagoya, Japan) (12-nd): J. Rojas (Ven) b 5 (Japan) pts.
BASKETBALL The Budweiser League's bottom club, Edinburgh Royals, have signed the former Manchester Giants and Newcastle Eagles forward Michael New. The Royals have released Brad Wedel to make room for the 30-year-old American.	FOOTBALL Real Madrid's Yugoslav international midfielder Perica Ogrizovic is set to move to Real Madrid, according to Spanish media reports yesterday. Real want to sign the 21-year-old before the Spanish winter transfer deadline expires
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IN BOXING DAY'S INDEPENDENT

FOOTBALL
Alan Curbishley talks to Glenn Moore about Charlton Athletic's fight for Premiership survival

Steve Tongue on great Boxing Day matches of the past

Plus a comprehensive guide to the Boxing Day programme, including our match-by-match guide

RACING

Greg Wood assesses the field for one of the highlights of the racing year, the King George VI Chase at Kempton

TENNIS

John Roberts on the year of Tim Henman and Greg Rusedski

TODAY'S NUMBER

66m

The number of dollars (£40m) the bank, Comerica, will pay over 30 years to put its name on the Detroit Tigers' new baseball stadium.

SPORT

NOTHING AMISS WITH LE TISS P14 • THE INCREDIBLE ALI EFFECT P17

England face confusing options

CRICKET

BY DEREK PRINGLE
in Melbourne

THE MELBOURNE Cricket Ground on Boxing Day can be a daunting place for any visiting team let alone one still tasting the remnants of numbing defeat as England must be. Christmas may be the season of goodwill to all men, but in Australia that does not extend as far as the England cricket team, who go into this fourth Test as rank outsiders. If Christmas cannot come too soon for some, it certainly has for England who need nothing less than a win to stay in the series.

With morale already low after conceding a 2-0 deficit in the Test series a humiliating nine-wicket defeat, coming just before a watershed Test match, was less than ideal. Speaking on the subject for the first time, the captain, Alec Stewart, echoed the scathing views previously given by the team manager, Graham Gough.

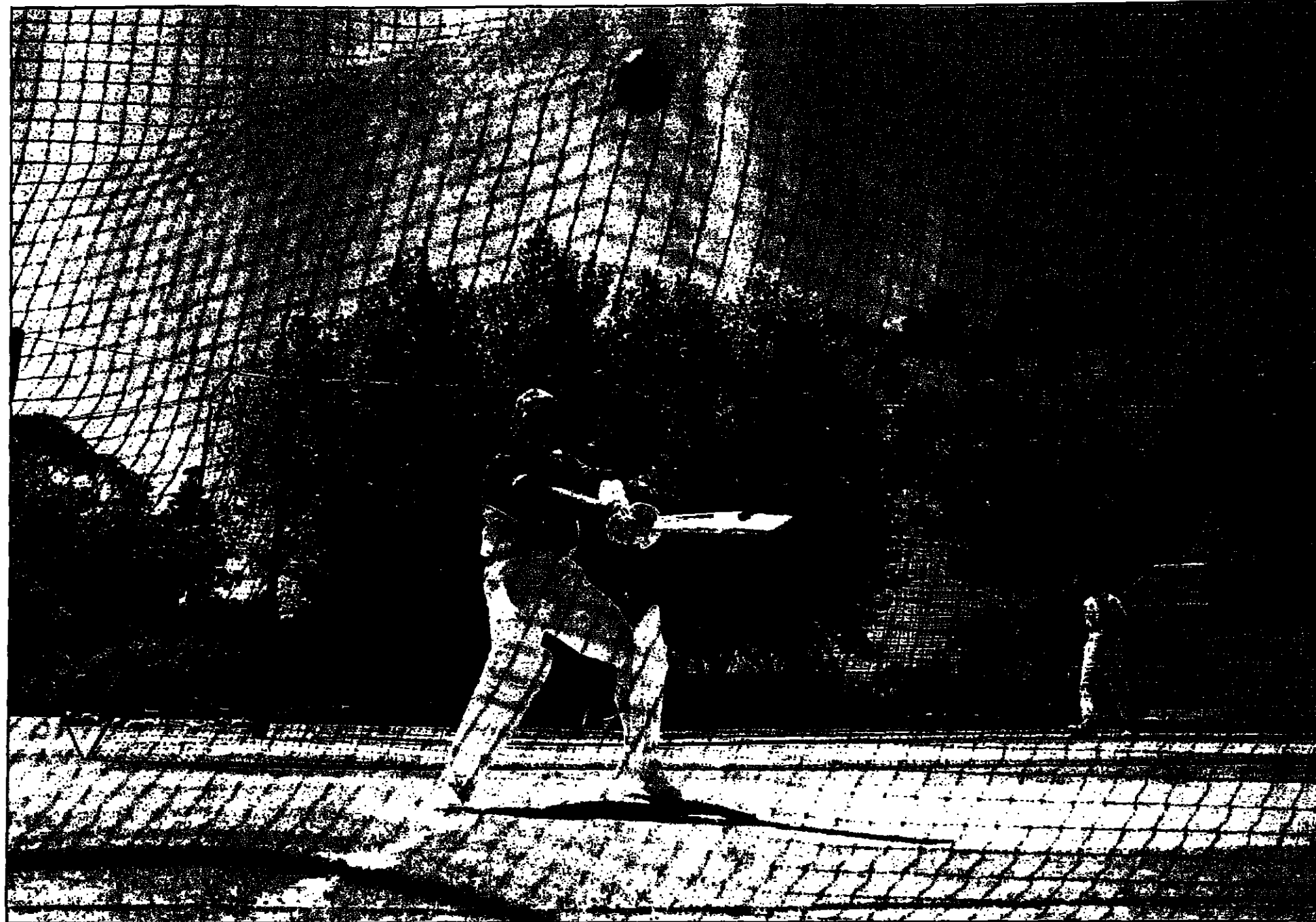
"It was probably our worst performance overseas since a certain Saturday in Sydney, eight years ago," he said. "I can accept that people can play badly, but I can't accept a poor approach."

"Playing for England, or anyone for that matter, you just don't go through the motions. We shall be sitting down and having a frank and open discussion about it before practice. After we've done that we'll look forward to the Test."

Whatever the soul searching achieves, Stewart is probably fortunate that six of the side likely to play on Saturday were not involved in Hobart. Having half a team tarnished merely by association rather than deed will undoubtedly help speed the healing process.

That said, England will probably not name a team until after their fielding practice on Christmas Day. According to Alec Stewart the make-up of the side is likely to comprise of six batsmen and five bowlers, the option of seven batsmen having "not really worked".

If it sounds daring, playing six batsmen and five front-line bowlers was surely why Stewart donned the gloves in the first place. Whether it be down to Australia's all-round mastery or the self-inflicted doubt of their opponents, England's



Alec Stewart, the England captain and wicketkeeper, is likely to drop down the batting order to No 5 for the fourth Test against Australia, which starts on Boxing Day. Allsport

confusion appears to have come full circle and no one will be quite sure until 11 men walk out in front of the 80,000-strong crowd that is expected on the first day.

Even now, the "sensible" option of Stewart dispensing with the gloves and opening - rumoured in Hobart but initially rebuffed here - has not entirely been rejected. Mind you, if there is a one thing the selectors like even less than losing, it is admitting they are wrong and all signs are that Stewart will keep the gloves, but drop

down a place in the batting order to five.

With Graeme Hick one of six centuries in the last match, the top six batsmen pick themselves. The bowling is less certain and unless Robert Croft has come back into the reckoning the three bowlers rested in Tasmania - Darren Gough, Alan Mullally and Dean Headley - are the only ones certain to play. Which leaves two to be picked from those that conceded 376 for 1 in 55.3 overs against an Australian XI.

It is not an easy task and the loss in Hobart has tended to cloud matters rather than elucidate them. Unless you forgive Alex Tudor, Peter Such, Dominic Cork and Angus Fraser for their lack of penetration and wasteful ways, the final two bowling places might just as well be pulled from Santa's sack.

Unless the pitch, in Stewart's words, is "something out of the ordinary", Tudor and Such, both having performed well in their single Test outings so far,

are favourites to complete the quintet.

When things become arbitrary, morale - and how to lift it - becomes an overriding pre-occupation. Fortunately not everyone will have been affected and if anyone can put some Christmas cheer into England's gloomy festive season it ought to be Gough.

In many ways Gough, with his good nature and bonhomie, is a natural Father Christmas, which probably means he will never quite make it to the

highest echelons of fast bowling. Let's face it, one cannot quite see Glenn McGrath getting along as well with the children as our Darren, who has already donned the white beard and red suit for the kiddies of Hobart.

There is a general consensus, from both camps, that Gough has been unlucky this series, having regularly beaten the bat and had several catches missed. Indeed, before the first innings in Adelaide he had had more catches dropped (six)

than wickets taken (five). But if the deficit was improved there another three chances still went begging.

But is it simply luck, or does Gough lack the guile to be truly great? Physically, he is less than ideal being just under six foot. The best Test batsmen tend to get out by edging full-length balls to either the keeper or slips. For that reason the ball needs to carry through to them, preferably between chest and knee high.

England's slips may have

been guilty of standing too deep on occasions but edges from Gough, a skiddy bowler, rarely carry comfortably and the ones that have been dropped have tended to be those that have only just carried. Gough has a low arm and a high character. Fast bowling generally demands that they are the other way around.

Gough, as he has done throughout his career, has borne his misfortune lightly, or at least he did until he became the culprit, dropping a fairly easy catch at long leg in Perth.

Normally, his ebullience has helped England ride their gloomier moments. Yet since that mistake, he has been noticeably less animated. No wonder the Aussies are cock-a-hoop. If they can get to a character as naturally upbeat as Gough, intimidating the others will have been a doddle.

While England's catching has contributed heavily to Gough's relatively low tally of wickets (10), the lack of runs from his bat has been of his own doing. Four years ago in Australia, he slammed a defiant half-century at Sydney. That now seems like a mirage and he has failed to pass 20 in his last 20 Tests.

Apart from a lack of confidence, his problem appears to be one of balance, the Yorkshireman having problems shifting his weight on to either front foot or back. You can get away with being in limbo against Durham or Sussex, but not against McGrath or Stuart MacGill, at least not for long enough to make a significant contribution.

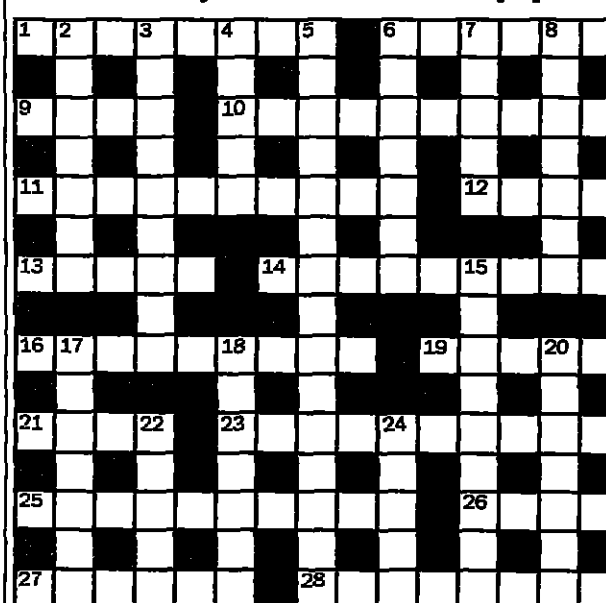
If six batsmen are to get enough runs for the bowlers to be able to apply real pressure on Australia, someone in the bottom five will have to stay with one of them. If Gough wants more wickets, scoring some runs may be as important as others taking their catches. Australia have called the Western Australian fast bowler, Matt Nicholson, into their squad for the fourth Test following the withdrawal of Jason Gillespie with a knee injury. Nicholson has enjoyed a resurgence this season after struggling last year with an illness which left him feeling permanently tired. He claimed 7 for 100 and scored an unbeaten half-century against England for his state in the drawn four match at the WACA last month.

THE THURSDAY CROSSWORD

No.3802 Thursday 24 December

by Spurius

Wednesday's solution



FLATFISH BOLENE
KLEB
AMERICAN BECOME
C M I A R M I
PUBCHAWL STRESS
E O S R O R A
S A O I Y S C O N
U P P E A O P U
NELSON EGYPTIAN
T A U E Y M I
MOUSE MONITOR
A S E U N O
INTELLO ASSASSIN

ACROSS

- 1 Promissory note accepted by north London outfit is false (8)
- 6 Police involved in second series of exercises in wood (6)
- 9 Content of programme chosen - repeat (4)
- 10 Callow youth in bid to join infantry (10)
- 11 Easily managed trailer, not very heavy (10)
- 12 Arrange for woman to leave hospital (4)
- 13 Nag, one taking part in fox-hunt (5)
- 14 Where one would expect to find his ribs? (3-6)
- 16 Leave after entering rowdy scene, making no trouble (9)
- 19 Note objection about plant's store of reserves

DOWN

- 21 Thick slice of cake is left by sailor (4)
- 23 Old means of persuading seamen to use hitch-hikes, initially (10)
- 25 Set out with ill-assorted carload of priests (10)
- 26 Press husband to make an end of the matter (4)
- 27 Woodcutter from Switzerland is found lying beside railway (6)
- 28 Soft furnishing (8)
- 2 You find it in the upper part of the wood (7)
- 3 Orange river I'd crossed - it forms part of the state border (3,6)
- 4 Power associated with logarithm, frequently (5)
- 5 Being hard at it from the

- 6 crack of dawn? (7,8)
- 7 Attempt at concealment after spilling the salt (7)
- 8 Weapon conveyed in sack (5)
- 9 House army supreme in church - it's cold and dark (4-3)
- 15 Boy receiving a punch, staggering around platform (6,5)
- 17 Free from restraint, pawnbroker with money gives away a couple of hundred (7)
- 18 Stronghold in which army's besieged by El Cid, maybe (7)
- 20 Essayist takes an age penning document about queen (7)
- 22 Bishop not so frequently having to pronounce benediction over (5)
- 24 Fail to justify religious opinion, mostly (5)

Platt moves for Sharpe

FOOTBALL
BY ALAN NIXON

DAVID PLATT is due to open talks today to make his first signing - Leeds United's out-of-favour winger Lee Sharpe.

Sharpe has spent a month on the sidelines after being transferred by manager David O'Leary, who made it clear the 27-year-old did not figure in his future plans. But Platt, who took over as Sampdoria's new coaching supervisor last week, will look to take Sharpe on loan until the end of the season with a view to a permanent deal.

Blackburn are closing in on Ashley Ward. Rovers have been given permission by Barnsley to speak to the striker, and the £3.5m deal - which will land Ward a £300,000 payment - should be completed by the weekend.

Blackburn want Ward eligible for the FA Cup tie with Charlton Athletic in the New Year and he would need to sign on Boxing

Day in order to be registered in time.

Liverpool's manager, Gérard Houllier, was given a boost in his move for Milan's German goalkeeper Jens Lehmann last night when Borussia Dortmund said he was too expensive at £1.5m. Aston Villa, resigned to losing Mark Bosnich under the Bosman ruling, have been alerted to the availability of Germany's second-choice keeper.

Thai Football Association officials have denied that the FA paid part of the salary of Thailand's coach, Peter Withe, to bribe them to vote for England's 2006 World Cup bid.

"I confirm that the English FA have never requested any commitment for such assistance,"

Worawi Makudi, secretary general of the FA of Thailand, said. Reports had suggested that the FA's generosity was an attempt to influence Worawi, Thailand's Fifa representative.

Another Fifa official is thinking of asking North Korea to stage two matches in the 2002 World Cup. Chung Mong Jun, head of the South Korean football association and a Fifa vice-president, said there were plans to field a joint North-South Korea team in the tournament, which is being co-hosted with Japan.

Arsenal's plans to sign the Nigerian international Nwankwo Kanu have had to be put on hold because the Internazionale striker, who was due to arrive on loan for the rest of the season with a view to a £4.5m transfer, is to undergo cartilage surgery.

England have moved up two places in the Fifa world rankings

for December to ninth - five places below their end-of-year ranking for 1997. Scotland have slipped two places to 38th.

Bruce Grobbelaar has parted company with Lincoln City after two appearances for the Second Division club.

The Zimbabwean international's Sincil Bank career lasted 12 days after signing on a non-contract basis from Ryman League Chesham United. He spent the days between his two games travelling to Zimbabwe for international duty, and the club needs more commitment. Grobbelaar is wanted by Zimbabwe to become assistant coach to Clemens Westerhof.

Newcastle United's Georgian midfielder Temur Ketsbaia has retired from international football. Ketsbaia said his decision was prompted by differences with the coaching staff.



Sharpe: Sampdoria target

Wolves have agreed terms with Havard Flo, the Norwegian striker who headed his country's goal against Scotland in the World Cup and is available for £750,000 from Werder Bremen.

West Bromwich Albion have moved closer to sharing the Hawthorns with Moseley rugby union club next season after a productive exploratory talks between senior officials.

Davis and Co fall short of clean break

SNOOKER
BY GUY HODGSON

SNOOKER'S OLD guard just clung on to power yesterday, ensuring that an uneasy peace at best will break out within the sport, even if there is an end to the current in-fighting.

Former world champions, Steve Davis and Dennis Taylor, and Jason Ferguson, who wished to overthrow the current chairman, Rex Williams, were elected on to the board of the governing body at the World Professional Billiards Association's annual meeting yesterday, but will be in a minority.

The vote by the 77 eligible members in a Birmingham hotel also formally elected co-opted directors Ray Reardon

and Jim McMahon which ensures Williams will have a four-three advantage in the board room. The dissenters have gained influence but not power.

After the five-hour meeting both sides called for a settlement of differences which centred on snooker's inability to secure sponsors even though the sport commands high television figures. Terry Griffiths, who withdrew his candidature midway through the afternoon, said: "I didn't want to be part of a split board. I didn't think that

was the best thing for the members or for me."

Taylor added: "We don't need all this haggling and fighting because it's not healthy... Now that Steve, Jason and myself are on the board we can take the game forward. Snooker's a great product. It appeals to all ages."

Williams, whose own position of chairman was not up for reelection but who could have been ousted if another rebel had been voted in, was also placatory. "Everybody should be pleased with the outcome. There will be no problems created by me but I don't know what problems might be created by those with self-interests."

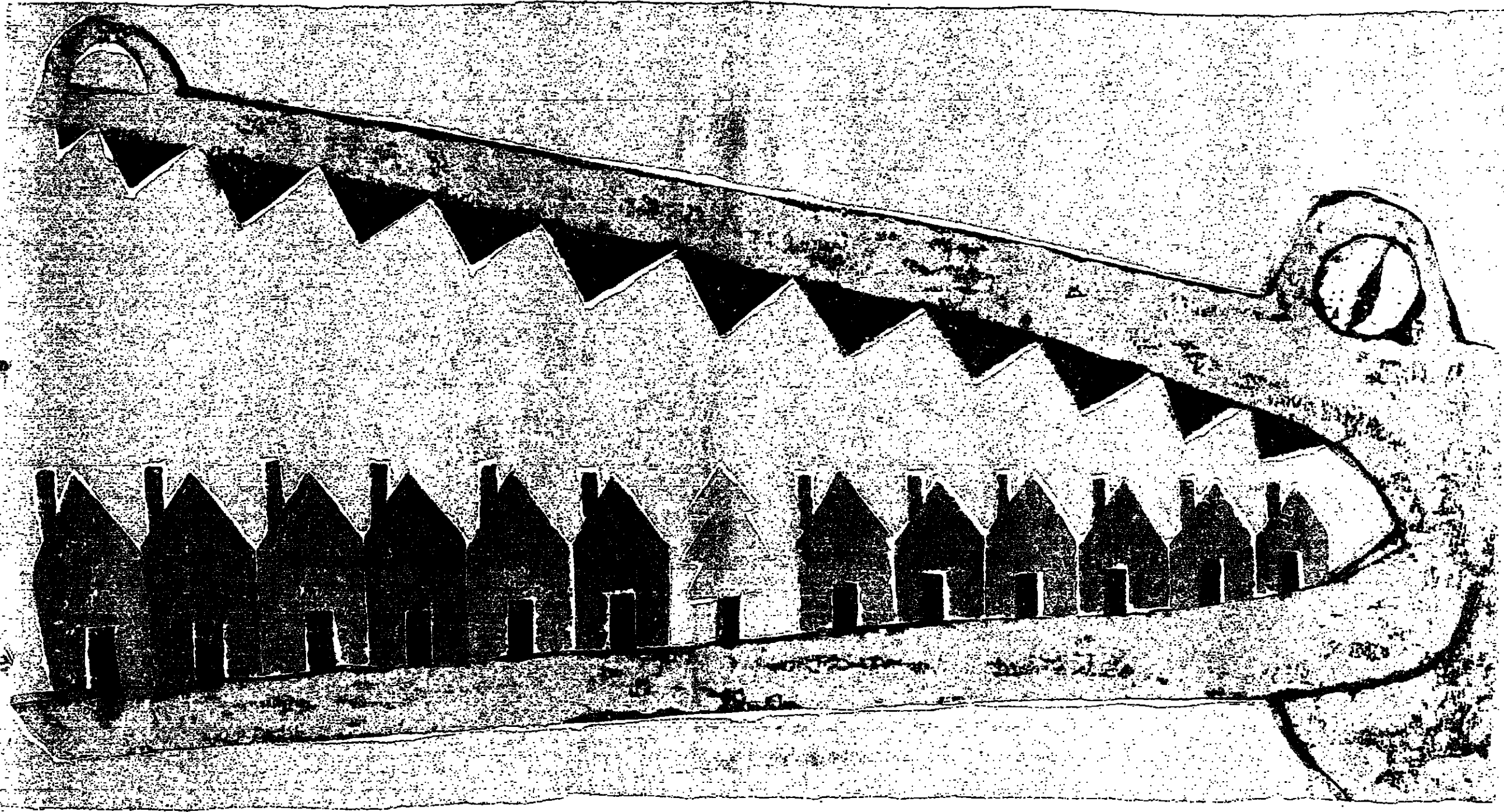
I was disappointed Terry withdrew his name because he would have given us a better balanced board. Now we have got to try and get some unity into the game. There is no animosity between myself, Steve and Dennis."

Snooker, politically never the most benign of environments, has been racked with division since Jim McKenzie, the chief executive, was removed from office a year ago. He is suing the WPBSA for breach of contract. High Court on 11 January, but he is by no means the only casualty of the civil war that has erupted since. The tournament

director, Ann Yates, who had worked in the sport since 1976, and Bruce Beckett, head of media relations, left the governing body during the summer after clashing with Williams while the sport's Independent on Sunday correspondent, Clive Everton, has had his life membership of the WPBSA revoked and been denied normal press facilities at tournaments. Further trouble could be ahead, too, because Sindhu Pulsirivong, president of the Thai Snooker and Billiards Association, has threatened to prevent tournaments taking part in Thailand if Williams remains in power.

THURSDAY REVIEW

COMMENT • FEATURES • ARTS • LISTINGS • TELEVISION



Gilstrap, the homesick explorer

A SHORT STORY FOR CHRISTMAS
BY PAUL THEROUX

The tamarind trees hummed with the evidence of baboons, Gilstrap had noticed, because the noisy creatures loved squatting in the branches, cracking a tamarind seed, and a smile, with each bite of their doggy teeth. You could not camp within 50 feet of a tamarind. But Gilstrap was not dismayed. "There it is!" he said, with a weary fatalism, and tugged his moustache. He was on a quest.

The Two-Toed Tumbo people were the object of this quest, yet as an explorer he knew that such a journey was a continuous series of startling confrontations of which the baboons chewing in the limbs of the tamarind were just one. This was the Zimbaba, the lower river.

It was not Mudford, the home he had left too long ago even to remember the names of its trees, nor any of the people there, except the ones who had tormented him as a youngster, and the woman who waited for him in vain. Her name was Elveera Howie. Mudford was the past and, like all such distant memories, it was unreal and a little absurd, a sort of toy-town he had abandoned, when he was Freddie Gilstrap from Webster Street.

Gilstrap, the explorer had a taste for hardships but could not abide nuisances, which was why he had left Mudford and why he had stayed away. Elveera was just an encumbrance, because she would not leave the hideous town.

Christmas was coming. Good! He was where he wanted to be, on the other side of the earth. In Central Africa, beneath the tamarinds and winterthorns of the Zimbaba banks. Gilstrap knew that had he been anywhere else, he would be yearning to be back here on the Zimbaba.

Sometimes, trekking alone in the heat along the river bank he was able, in his stupor of satisfaction, to recover his dislike of Mudford. There was, first of all, Elveera Howie, supporting herself by giving music lessons in the parlour of her house near Craddock Bridge, adjacent to the Interstate; and the Interstate itself, looming over the town, illuminating Mudford with its glaring lights at night and, with that traffic, drowning the music of Elveera's strings. Mudford was never silent, nor ever dark.

The pillars of the Interstate attracted graffiti, and beneath the arches were strange encampments of drifters and drunks. Then there were Gilstrap's habits: the litter, the filthy black seats of a Mudford taxi and the meaningless smile of the driver. Some-

one at a soda fountain slurping a drink or loudly chewing ice. Circus animals, baseball hats on backwards, the exultant insincerity of *The Mudford Messenger*. Dirty hands, cold eyes, billboards, bad breath, most flags. The person who rested a damp drinking-glass on a book cover, and bus fumes, and the idiot laughter of someone watching TV. Mayor Mazzola, Dr Enid Hugo the dentist, Hump his neighbour's lab - just one of Brimble's slobbering dogs. Elveera's cat Morris, most children, and - in this season - everything to do with Christmas, from the Christmas carols monotonously repeated in elevators and the overstuffed Santa ambushing him from every Mudford street corner, to the top-heavy Christmas trees on their wobbly stands.

Gilstrap craved new sights, and in Africa he was thrilled when he reflected, *I have never been here before*, and better, *Nor seen anything like this before*.

Even better, *Nor has anyone else*.

He was altogether a satisfied man. He was more than fifty, but could pedal that many miles on his bike in half a day, and not only could do that number of push-ups as well but often did. On any quest, he said, the principal thing was never to look back.

His bearers saw him down the Zimbaba from Chambo in dugouts - the river was down, the heavy rains were not due until mid-December - and just above Kawaba he paid off his bearers and sent them back, and struck out on his own, the low scrub smacking his puttees.

And while Gilstrap marched he heard a child's bratty voice call out, "Go away!"

"On the contrary,"

"I am staying."

Because, Gilstrap reflected, it was a land without Christmas trees, nor any suggestion of home; it was, in a word, not Mudford. He had spoken indignantly and it seemed significant that there had been no answer, so the bird had quite seen his point.

One afternoon, he pitched his tent and, squatting

to tidy the tent pegs, could not rise from his heels. He toppled forward, used the last of his strength to zip the flapping door, and there he lay, under canvas, twitching like a monkey. He was very cold. He shivered. He grew warm. His brain ached, his skin was scorched, he panted, he slept, he saw doggy demons with chewed fur and red eyes; he saw cranky birds on black trees with beaks like scissors; then he saw nothing, for he felt that his eyes were being boiled in their sockets.

When the fever finally passed, Gilstrap crept from his tent, weak and thirsty, and knelt at the river bank. He saw a troop of baboons all tangled in the tamarinds. The baboons joined him, scoop-splashing the water to their mouths as Gilstrap did - the Zimbaba was clean enough to drink.

Ranged on the bank, the baboons regarded him with dripping faces, but what struck Gilstrap most of all was the way the baboons separated into little families, mother and child and browning father, just the way Mudford families picnicked at Hickey Park or rested by the banks of the Mystic River, near Craddock Bridge, at Christmas. Now he remembered that fragment of Mudford and sighed.

Resuming his hike, he saw a crocodile on a sand bank with its mouth wide open, and a white-feathered egret approached it, and Gilstrap was put in mind of Dr Enid Hugo, the dentist, and her long legs and white smock. The egret did a most dentist-like thing, tilted her head and drilled expertly between the crocodile's teeth, foraging as she cleaned them. He remembered the garrulity of Dr Hugo, though perhaps her questions were no worse than the insistent egret.

A roly-poly hippo, not far away, raised itself before Gilstrap and seemed to smile, and Gilstrap was put in mind of a well-padded Santa, shaking with laughter, on a Mudford street corner. But the Santa was the more harmless of these buffoons.

Even trotting busily along the banks, the hippos looked like shoppers and they munched in the herbage like mothers at lunch.

"Go away!" he heard, and it was repeated.

He knew it was another Go-Away Bird, yet now the command made him pensive.

Gilstrap pushed on, picking the odd guava and watching the slow-footed progress of his dusty boots, to the doubtful encouragement of the Monotonous Lark and the screech of the Racquet-tail Roller in their tumbling acrobatics.

Towards nightfall, camped by a kopje, he felt a pair of eyes upon him - a warthog receding - indeed backing directly into his hole. Yet Gilstrap did not see the tusks and the hairy nostrils, the bristly face nor the oversized head, but the sweeter and sillier face of Hump, the lab, settling into his dog-bed with the same tentative inquiry of his hindquarters.

Not twenty feet away, another wart-hog was also reversing: this one, with a snout like a hood ornament, looked like an old Chevy, specifically that of Ed Brimble, Gilstrap's Mudford neighbour, as he fastidiously backed into his garage.

Gilstrap woke and crawled from his tent to see Aunt Torn at breakfast, nodding at her spinster sisters, Grace and Trudy. But no: though they had many Gilstrap features - solemn and long-faced and leggy - it was a trio of Marabou Storks, at work on the remnants of the food Gilstrap had unwisely left out last night. They had just about finished his provisions, and had punished the horde of guavas he had gathered.

Put distinctly in mind of Mudford at that juncture, he saw something Wagnerian in the Cape Buffalo, which looked like an entire cast of *Parsifal* at the Mudford Opera. Reminiscing in this way Gilstrap hardly noticed the eland beneath their horns, so lyre-like you half expected the phantom hand of a lovely woman - Elveera's perhaps - to reach out and pluck them and fill the air with the plangency of this chord.

Yet there was no music here. There was all of Africa, and not the chirping of birds but their sudden utterances, the Go-Away Bird with its command, and even more orders from the Mourning Dove, which repeated, "Work harder, work harder!" and at noon, "No farther, no farther!" and at nightfall, "Drink lager, drink lager!"

In his already cragulous state, Gilstrap heard and obeyed and, listening for more, heard the Laughing Dove laughing and a Spotted hyena yapping like

a boasting child. Stumbling in the darkness, he shone his torch and saw a porcupine like a pot-scrubber and a Night Ape lurking like Mayor Mazzola, and a large ripe artichoke. The artichoke made him hungry - and a bit homesick, too, for the last artichoke he had eaten at Elveera's in Mudford - but, before he could feast on this one, he saw it revealed as a pangolin.

Onward in the morning on more reluctant feet, he saw a squirrel and he was back in Hickey Park, but it was just a bush squirrel, nor as glossy or as well-fed as the Mudford squirrels. He saw more families of Mudford picnickers, but they were troops of Chacma baboons. Nor was that creature Morris the cat, but instead a frolicking, clawless otter, drying itself on a rock; that coiled coach-whip an Egyptian cobra, that coat-rack on the pretty patterned carpet a Goliath heron standing in a backwater in a small sea of hyacinths.

"Go Away," cried the Go-Away Bird.

He glanced up and saw a Fish Eagle and, for an instant, was in the Mudford Post Office, standing under the American Eagle, getting his mail, which at this season would have been a stack of Christmas cards.

Yet the Hooded Vulture was a hooded vulture, the tse-tse flies were tse-tse flies, the crocs crocs, the bats bats, the sunlight's shattering flash like the swipe of a golden sword. Gilstrap knew he ought to have been nearer to the object of his quest, and yet he seemed no nearer.

He turned inland, away from the river bank, in desperation and what he saw made him pine for Mudford: as far as he could see were Christmas trees. Pine trees here? Yes, the trees were gorgeous - their green boughs beautifully decorated with bright trinkets. Gilstrap wept at their symmetry and their colour, and even at the way they so explicitly wobbled on their stands.

Through his tears of homesickness, how was Gilstrap to know that these were the Two-Toed Tumbo People in their ceremonial cloaks, which were contrived from the feathers of the Green-Backed Heron and the Green Sandpiper, the Emerald Cuckoo and the Olive Bee-eater, and hung with ornaments?

"Go Away," cried the Go-Away Bird.

This time Gilstrap obliged, leaving his tins and his camp stool and his puttees and his tent, and fled upriver to Chambo, and caught the night bus, the first of many journeys that brought him back to Mudford and his love.

INSIDE	Letters	2	Obituaries & Gazette	6-7	Christmas Day TV	10
	Leaders and comment	3-4	Arts	8	Satellite & Radio	11
	Features	5	Film	9	Today's TV	12
						FILMS OF 1998

Star of Bethlehem

Sir: There have been several astronomical explanations for the Star of Bethlehem. Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) suggested the star was a conjunction of the planets Jupiter and Saturn in 7BC (Saturday Essay, 19 December). In the present century alternative suggestions have included a comet or a nova.

None, however, fits the scant account of this event in the Gospel according to Matthew II: 2-12: "...the star which they [the Wise Men] saw in the East, went before them, till it came and stood where the child was..." A "star" travelling across the sky in this way and seemingly standing still over a particular terrestrial location cannot easily be reconciled with a nova, comet or planet.

There is a growing body of evidence to support a theory originally advanced by Victor Clube and Bill Napier that the history of our civilisation has been punctuated by episodes of cometary missile impacts. (See *Clube and Napier, The Cosmic Winkler*, Blackwell Oxford 1990; F Hoyle and N C Wickramasinghe, *Life on Mars: the case for a cosmic heritage*, Clarendon Press, Bristol, 1997). Such events would have played a crucial role in the evolution of myths as well as religious beliefs.

An impact event of this type involving the explosion in the atmosphere of a small cometary missile occurred in Tunguska, Siberia, this century. The Russian newspaper *Sibir* of 2 July 1908 reported, from a vantage point some distance from the epicentre of the explosion: "Early in the ninth hour of the morning of June 30 a very unusual natural phenomenon was observed here. In the village of Nizhne-Karelsk... the peasants saw a body shining very brightly, indeed too bright for the naked eye, with a blue-white light..."

This bears comparison with a medieval account of a "fireball event", cited by Victor Clube, Bill Napier and Mark Bailey: "A very terrifying apparition and sign of wonder has been seen in Bamberg and Liechtenfels. In the year 1560, on 28 December, [this apparition] was seen in the sky which first had its beginning over Ebersberg in Franconia, and rose directly over Zeyl, and then from Zeyl [moved] towards the town call Elpmann... and stopped still there for a long time."

Recent archaeological evidence from sites in Tunisia and Sweden points to an asteroid impact in the Middle East around 1000BC (*British Archaeological Reports* S728, 1998). This would accord well with Old Testament accounts of the destruction of Jericho, which are full of graphic descriptions of stones raining down from the skies, and where Joshua is said to have bid the sun to stand still in the sky (Old Testament, Book of Joshua). What Joshua must have seen was clearly not the sun standing still, but the distant glow of an immense fireball. One might wonder whether the account in Matthew of the Christmas Star is an event of a similar kind, although smaller in scale and viewed at a safe distance of perhaps a hundred kilometres.

Several early Christian writers have referred to the extraordinary nature of the Star of Bethlehem. For example in the second century Ignatius of Antiochia in an Epistle to the Ephesians XIX wrote thus: "The star was so bright that its light was unspeakable and its newness caused astonishment... a new star unlike any of the other well-known planetary bodies..."

This might well have been another example of a Tunguska type event - a fragment of a comet approaching the Earth, entering the atmosphere and eventually exploding in the skies over the Middle East some distance away from Bethlehem. A cometary missile impact, of the kind that has punctuated history since the end of the last Ice Age, would then have heralded the birth of Jesus Christ.

On such a picture one would also expect a multitude of smaller meteoroids to follow the larger cometary missile. It is then easy to understand how the resulting

spectacle of a great meteor shower came to be immortalised as a "host of angels".
Professor CHANDRA WICKRAMASINGHE
Cardiff

Rattle fights on

Sir: In light of your report "Rattle to quit Labour's musical desert" (31 December), I wanted to put the record straight.

I do not feel that the UK is an artistic desert, but rather a parched garden in need of attention. It seems that the first drops of water are on their way, given, for example, the much-needed grant increases to some of our orchestras, and the setting up of the Youth Music Trust to start dealing with some of the problems of instrumental teaching provision.

We in the arts community are all a little punch-drunk after years of cuts and freezes, but I hope we are not so damaged that we cannot give credit where it is due. The Government has at least started to do something to repair the damages to the arts in the UK, and we need to welcome that.

There is still much to be done - the latest figures show that over £60m has been lost from music education over the last seven years. I and my colleagues will continue to shout until our companies are healthy once more, and until the grotesque inequalities of educational provision are tackled.

But not all criticism implies opposition - let us encourage the Government to carry on rebuilding the arts, while constantly reminding them to get a move on, before it's too late!
Sir SIMON RATTLE
London, WC2

Sir: I was saddened to learn that Sir Simon Rattle may leave the country.

I, too, despair of the future of school music. In many primary schools, the whole of the morning sessions are now given over to Maths and English. So all the rest

of the subjects - science, ITC, geography, history, music, art, PE, drama and RE - jostle for a precious place in the shorter afternoon sessions.

Last term, I conducted a straw poll among 60 of my students training to be primary teachers. Only a handful had been given an opportunity to observe or teach a music lesson on their school placement; the rest had found music eluded out of the curriculum to almost vanishing point. One school's classroom music consisted of half an hour a term for each class.

Each day your Gazette lists birthdays of famous people, well over half of whom have attained distinction in those very curriculum areas which are now being marginalised: music, drama, sport, religion and art. What a chilling thought that, in 50 years' time, your birthday Gazette might be reduced to a dreary list of MPs, lexicographers and accountants.
BARBARA POINTON
Thriplow, Cambridgeshire

Bishop vs BBC

Sir: I find the recent letters from the Bishop of St Albans (21 December) quite astounding.

He seems unable to accept that Christianity represents only a minority of people in this country and imagines that the BBC's

Sir: John Walsh is unimaginative in his response to Christmas day ("Fairy lights and surgical strikes", 21 December). He could tell his children a ghost story or sing *The Village Pump* or take them round the garden looking at the sleeping plants. Christmas for children can be a magical time. The preceding three months hear most adults complaining about Mammom and the truth of Christmas being hidden behind commercialism. I don't see why we can't all take responsibility for our own Christmas. Decide

unwillingness to give more time to the religious significance of Christmas is due to fear. Fear, not only about the ratings war, but also of religious concepts of death, eternity, mercy or human meaning.

How much television does he watch? These topics are dealt with frequently, although not necessarily from the Christian point of view.

Does the bishop believe that Muslims, Jews and other religious leaders would be justified in complaining when their views are not aired as appropriately as they consider fit? And what about Humanists, who are rarely heard?

It seems to me that it is the bishop who is bewildered about his and Christianity's purpose, not the BBC about its purpose.
ALAN GOLDING
Brookmans Park, Hertfordshire

Sir: The complaint that the BBC gives inadequate coverage of Christianity got an inadequate reply from the head of BBC Religion (Right of Reply, 18 December). The BBC does indeed give inadequate coverage not only of Christianity but of all religion, despite the large number of radio and television programmes on the subject, because they hardly attempt more than a superficial expression or examination of any religious doctrines or practices.

However, Christians would get more sympathy from non-Christians if they showed more awareness of the equally inadequate coverage of all such doctrines and practices. Moreover, considering that only one tenth of the population are observant members of any religious denomination, the BBC also gives inadequate coverage of non-religious beliefs and behaviours.

The best solution would be the abolition of the institution called "BBC Religion" and the establishment of a new department devoted to proper coverage of all serious metaphysical and moral ideas and activities in our multi-creedal and multi-cultural society. This could produce programmes enthusiastically expressing the celebration of major religious festivals, Christian and non-Christian, but also programmes critically examining the background to such events, without the constant bias towards the mainstream of the Christian tradition.
NICOLAS WALTER
Rationalist Press Association
London N1

Grow old gratefully

Sir: You carry yet another article on the negative aspects of ageing ("And now I am old", 22 December). This is certainly more than one too many.

one hour. We had not got the Thameslink timetable to hand so we tried Railtrack on the web. The result was a choice of journey times ranging from just over two hours to three-and-a-quarter hours, but you do take in Bedford (north of Fletwick), London St Pancras, London Bridge, London Cannon Street and, eventually, London Blackfriars; four changes, three trains and two tube journeys later.
ARTEUR BOURNE
Fletwick, Bedfordshire

IN BRIEF

how you could enjoy the enforced festive season and make it meaningful for you. Celebrate the solstice, celebrate your family, or celebrate Christ.
CLARE HARDING
Stansted, Essex

Sir: You readers may like to be warned. Recently we planned to take the Thameslink train from Fletwick to London Blackfriars, a straight enough direct journey of just under

Certainly poverty and ill health prevent many people from enjoying their later life, but many retired people enjoy the freedom from the responsibilities of work and family. Even some with potentially serious illnesses can enjoy themselves as so many treatments are available to keep illness under control.

We have to be a little bit old to become grandparents and enjoy the many new adventures that this brings us. It also gives us an element of immortality to see certain aspects of our own personality pass to future generations.

Becoming a great-grandparent gave my great-grandmother, my grandmother and my mother and father a great deal of pleasure; it is something which I can look forward to with optimism.
MARGARET BEITH
Gulden Sutton, Cheshire

Debt to De Freitas

Sir: I was one of the greatest admirers of Helen de Freitas, who was a most remarkable and talented lady. She demonstrated in all that she did a most charming manner and a formidable intelligence. I hope therefore that you will allow me to correct one thing in your excellent obituary by Leonard Miall (17 December).

Lady de Freitas did not, at any time, organise meetings to help elect our present Speaker, the Rt Hon Betty Boothroyd MP, even though they were great friends. What she did do, at a most important time in the Labour Party, was to host meetings of National Executive Committee members to work on various problems we were experiencing.

I hope you will allow me to put on record what an enormous debt we all owe to her.
GWYNETH DUNWOODY MP
(Crewe and Nantwich, Lab)
House of Commons
London SW1

Our brutal friends

Sir: As the dust of the last week's futile bombing raids on Iraqi towns and bases settles and we move into the, hopefully, reflective period of Christmas and year end, it might be an appropriate moment to ponder on the Government's dealing with Iraq and its next-door neighbour, Iran.

All year there has been the spectacle of our Foreign Office siding up to the murderous mullahs (who are suddenly handing out oil contracts), lauding by turn the new "liberalism" perceived to be prevailing under President Khatami and his "rule of law". Salman Rushdie is publicly mollified (and privately gagged) and there is a scramble to comply with Tehran's orders to "close down" all groups working from this country purported to be in opposition to the Iranian government (first in line being the UK-registered charity Iran Aid; after 15 years of rescuing children orphaned by the regime its funding has been cut off).

On the other hand Saddam Hussein continues to be presented as number one Bogyman, the sledgehammer comes out again to crush him and his people and Iraqi opposition groups are invited to tea in Whitehall.

Make no mistake, the regimes in question are still equally horrible, so we could ask, which of the two diametrically-opposed policies is the "ethical" one - or are they both?

BEILINDA MCKENZIE
Friend of Iran Aid
London N6

Sir: The Prime Minister's behaviour in the bombing of Iraq reminds me of the one character that is more despicable than a bully. That is the person who tags along and joins in with the bullying - the person who takes no risk because the bully will be there to hide behind in the unlikely event of the victim turning on them.
MICHAEL COYLE
London N21

Modern desires

Sir: Sam Arnold-Forster (Letter, 10 December) cites Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights - "everyone has the right to work" - in criticising the free market and increasing unemployment.

This is to confuse two completely different concepts: the right to work and the right to a job. The former is conferred by the UDHR, the latter is an excuse for disastrous centrally-controlled economies.

In any event, it is patently not true that "what most people want is a humble job and the ability to buy their own food". At least, most people want a great deal more than that. If most people genuinely had such humble desires then the free market could and would provide it.

People actually want the fastest car, the newest trainers and the most fashionable clothes. The free market is a tool, not an end in itself. If it results in a society which is unfair, harsh, greedy and selfish then it is merely reflecting the attitudes of the members of that society.
DANIEL BROMILOW
London NW3

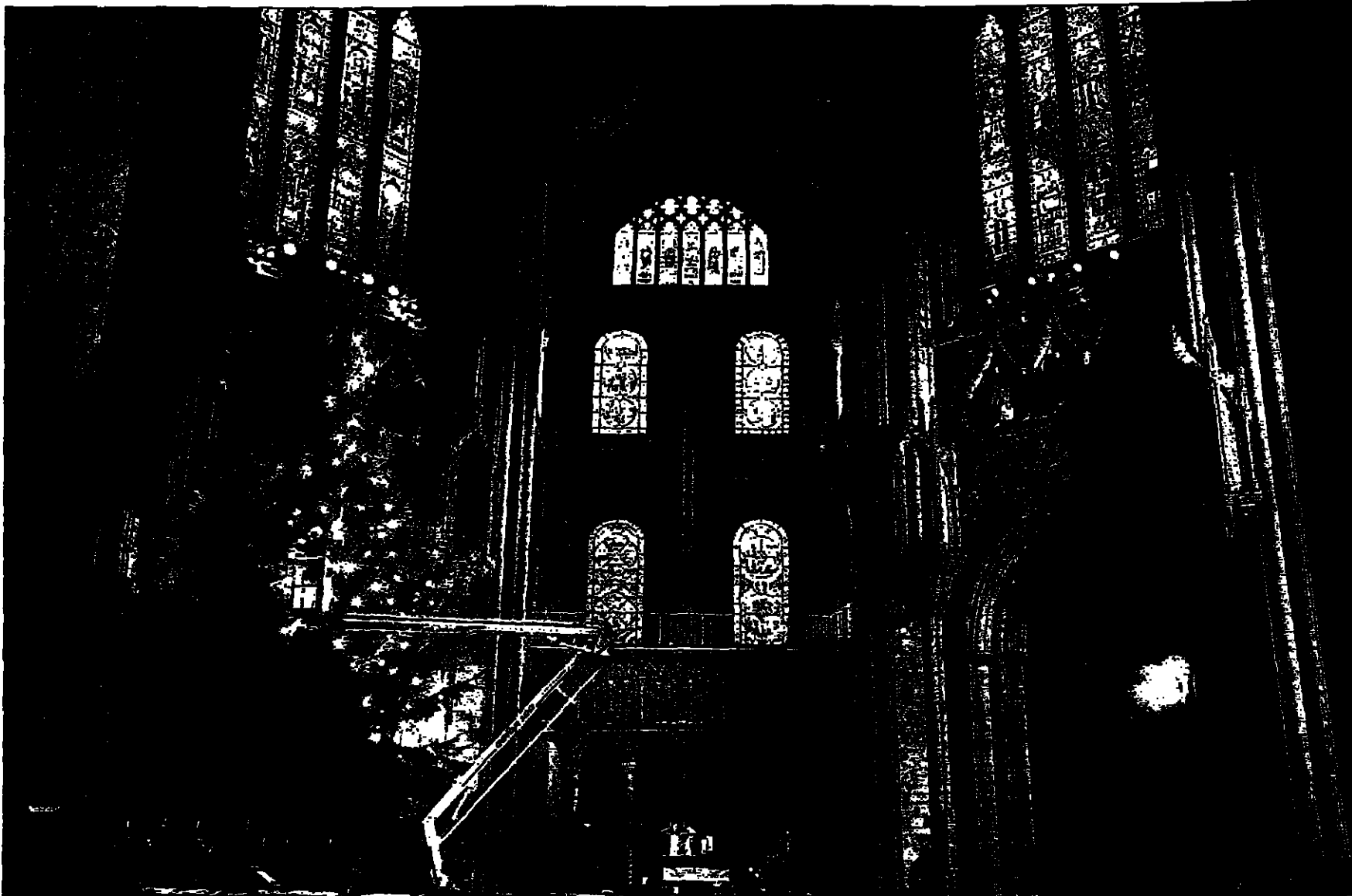
Christmas jeer

Sir: Given that the function of the Paymaster General is to "provide a banking and pensions service for government departments and other public bodies", perhaps Geoffrey Robinson should be congratulated for providing a £370,000 loan to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. In addition to showing an unquestionable level of duty, he has a praiseworthy achievement to his credit in the resignation of Mr Mandelson.
TIM CROSSLAND
Romsey, Hampshire

Sir: Two ministers resign in one day - there is a Santa Claus after all!
TONY FLANAGHAN
Salisbury

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Post letters to Letters to the Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, London E14 5DL, and include a daytime telephone number, fax to 0171 293 2056 or e-mail to letters@independent.co.uk. E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.



Dressing the Cathedral No 4: Arranging the lights on Ely cathedral's 42-foot tree

Brian Harris

Traditional festive fun to make the family crack(er) up

IT HAS been my experience in recent years that Christmas crackers are not what they used to be. In my youth we used to get really good things in crackers - not just hats, but also good toys such as metal puzzles, indoor fireworks, and so on.

The only good thing I have got out of a cracker recently was a key ring with one of those black bulbs attached which, when you press it, lights up and unlocks your car from a distance, and sets off other people's car alarms. What was nice about this was that, being a cracker present, it only lit up - it didn't unlock anything - so it gives my keys a plutocratic look without committing me to anything.

(Indeed, even 12 months later the red light is still working, so I have occasionally been able to use it as an emergency torch to find

very small things such as the ignition on the car...)

But one thing that has never changed since my youth is the quality of the jokes in crackers. They were bad then, and they are bad now. In fact, I suspect they are still the same jokes, the same schoolboy puns such as "What did the carpet say to the desk? 'I can see your drawers!'"

It has occurred to me that in this last issue before Christmas Day I might be doing a public service by providing some new cracker jokes, so over the weekend I programmed the mighty *Independent* computer to do some updated Christmas cracker jokes.

I fed into it the basic history of British jokes, a few hundred old matchboxes and a simple rundown of the last year's news, and

asked it to come up with some new jokes which you, the readers, could easily cut out and insert into the end of your Christmas crackers for the delectation of all the family. Here is what it provided. I think you will agree that the quality maintains all the awfulness of yesteryear.

Q. Why should Peter Mandelson always be accompanied?
A. Because he should never be left alone (a loan).

Q. What is the difference between denationalisation and Tariq Ali?
A. One is privatisation and the other is *Private Eye's* Asian.

Q. What do you call Richard Bran-



MILES KINGDON
The jokes in crackers were bad then and are bad now - I suspect they are still the same jokes

son spending Christmas Day over Chinese air space?
A. Virgin on the ridiculous!

Q. Why is the station at Southend-on-Sea like the House of Lords?
A. Because it is the end of the line for the piers (peers).

Q. Why is the abdication of the Queen like a heart attack?
A. Because they are both a shock to the constitution.

Q. What is the motto of the Royal Family?
A. Never say Di.

Q. Why is Queen Elizabeth II like someone sitting reading in the lavatory?
A. Because they are both determined to stay on the throne as long as possible.

As the computer seemed to be building up something of a fixation with the Royal Family here, I had to instruct it to keep off Buckingham Palace, and move off in a different direction.

Q. Why, at the Rio ecological summit, did President Clinton refuse to cut down on nocturnal emissions?
A. (Censored.)

Q. Why is Luciano Pavarotti like the Millennium Dome?
A. They both occupy an immense area (aria).

Q. What does General Pinochet want for Christmas?
A. That it should be Chile for the time of year.

Q. What do the Foreign Secretary's private detective and the Chancellor's private detective do on the beach during their summer holidays?
A. They stand around in the baking sunshine and watch Robin Cook and Gordon Brown!

Q. What do Beijing and voyeurism have in common?
A. They both used to be called Peking (peeking).

Q. How do you get rid of the boss of Harrods?
A. You tell him: "You're Fired!"

Let me know how the jokes went down with the family. I'll pass it on to the computer.

THE INDEPENDENT

1 CANADA SQUARE, CANARY WHARF, LONDON E14 5DL TELEPHONE: 0171 293 2000 OR 0171 345 2000 FAX: 0171 293 2435 OR 0171 345 2435
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Hard lessons to be learned from a very public downfall

THE SWIFT offer, and prompt acceptance, of Peter Mandelson's resignation at least shows that New Labour can act decisively. That will probably seem little comfort to ministers. This is the greatest blow that the Government has suffered since it came to power. Losing the very architect of New Labour over such a stupid and sloppy mistake, the destruction of one of the Prime Minister's closest allies is nothing short of a disaster for Mr Blair's "project".

This highlights the Prime Minister's failure to act decisively earlier in the year, and sack the Paymaster General, Geoffrey Robinson. Perhaps if he had done, Mr Mandelson would have realised the implications of his embarrassing "loan" earlier, with less pain all round.

We must hope that the Prime Minister has learnt his lesson: he must act quickly whenever a colleague is left twisting in the wind, crippled by allegation after allegation. John Major paid a high price for failing to do so, and Mr Blair must avoid the same fate.

As for Mr Mandelson, at least the speed of his departure does him some credit. He knows how important it is that the public have confidence in their elected representatives. They must be "whiter than white", in the Prime Minister's own words, to ensure that politics and politicians do not fall even further in public esteem.

In the absence of further allegations, it seems that Mr Mandelson's offence was relatively benign: not to register the money he received from Mr Robinson, and not to tell his Permanent Secretary that the debt prevented him from overseeing investigations into his benefactor. The former Trade Secretary made a frank confession of those mistakes in his resignation letter yesterday.

There is as yet no question that any influence was in fact bought, or any specific decision perverted, by the relationship. All the same, it was unhealthy and improper for a prospective minister to allow himself to become indebted to a colleague, and a rich and powerful businessman. The public, tired of "sleaze", demand nothing less than the highest standards. Politicians must be open, whether or not they think they have done anything technically wrong. The transparency rules that Tory scandals prompted are beginning to enforce this, and are having the desired effect of forcing more disclosure. The days when politicians could disregard public opinion, or rely on journalists to cover up for them, are long gone.

Mr Blair must now hope that the Christmas holidays will act as a fire-break against this scandal. Perhaps the holiday spirit will calm feelings and encourage forgiveness. But this would be a pity if it were to weaken the impact of the last lesson that New Labour must learn: that cosy-ing up to the rich and powerful has its dangers, as well as its opportunities.



Peace on earth has made real advances

THE COMING of Christmas Eve invites us to embrace peace on earth, and goodwill to men - except that at the moment there seems to be very little of either. Glee has met Peter Mandelson's humiliation in some quarters. Bombs have been falling in the Gulf. Political rivalries have boiled over into divisive hatred in Washington's impeachment debate. In China, a promised political thaw has frozen over again. Russia is still mired in chaotic economic decline and its very own crony version of democracy.

Even so, we should not despair. There is much to celebrate, and many achievements to praise. The birth of Christ, and the worship it inspires, represent nothing if not the triumph of human hope and creativity, and it is appropriate that on the eve of celebrating His birth, we

should celebrate that creativity and hope all around us.

Peace on earth has made advances. Northern Ireland's parties defied pessimists last week by reaching agreement on the composition of the Province's new government. The first guns to be handed in during the present troubles have emerged from the Loyalist Volunteer Force.

The fall of Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel holds out the hope of progress in the Middle East. Most of the year has been spent in a depressing morass of broken promises; at least it is ending with the possibility that a real leader, courageous rather than just shallow and televisual, will emerge to compromise with Israel's Arab neighbours.

Some crises did not materialise. Kosovo's civil war has simmered, but not exploded. Nato action, though not going as far as it should have done, was prompt and strong enough to deter the Serb aggression so conspicuous and unopposed in Bosnia. Pakistan's and India's nuclear testing was followed by tentative diplomatic contact. For these not-so-small mercies, we should be grateful.

Christian faith and common humanity hold that all men and women are of equal worth. Poverty prevents the realisation of this ideal; it has made unwelcome advances this year in Asia, in the financial crisis still reverberating around that region. But the Asian flu has not carried across all economies. The world financial system has not collapsed, and the rich world will at least get chances in the near future to relieve poverty, rather than sink into depression.

If all people are equal, as Jesus preached, then they should also be equally responsible for their actions. The world has made progress towards this end, too, establishing a global criminal court. General Pinochet's detention is another advance. Even if he now escapes back to Chile, he will at least have been made aware of the pain caused by his actions.

The world is not perfect. Hope and inspiration do not shine into every dark corner. But they are there, and they are growing. If the message of Christmas means anything, it is this: never despair.

The most illustrious political suicide since Parkinson - but why?

PETER MANDELSON'S is the most illustrious political suicide since the resignation of Cecil Parkinson back in the early Thatcher era. And the most significant. The demise of David Mellor in John Major's day was bad news for the Tory back-to-basics campaign, but Mellor himself was merely an effective (if glib) minister doing a pretty good job over at Heritage. He was not the embodiment of the new Conservative political idea, nor was he the close confidante of the Prime Minister. But Tony without Peter is more

Bill without Hillary. Geoffrey Robinson's departure yesterday will be infinitely easier to cope with.

Yet it is still not clear to me what Mandelson has done that renders him unfit to serve in government. Indeed, he has resigned only a day later he would (among other things) have given me just enough time to advise readers that I thought he shouldn't, and wouldn't. That article would have hung round my neck as permanent testimony to my fallibility, and I have only just been spared from writing it.

But my bemusement, to some extent, remains. As a proposition, I believe that the two circumstances under which ministers should disown themselves are a) if they do something badly wrong, and b) - unfashionable this one - if they're bad at their jobs. Taking the latter one first, the consensus seems to be that Peter Mandelson was set to be a good (possibly very good) Trade Secretary; business actively approved of him and the trade unions respected him.

This is not a proposition that finds much support among the journalistic

profession. We are, as a breed, generally in favour of resignations. Nothing adrenalinises a newsroom like a news flash announcing the unexpected departure of someone powerful: profiles are ordered up, cartoons are commissioned, the "events leading up to..." are chronicled with dates and times. And, of course, the heroic role played by "The Daily X" and "The Sunday Y" in uncovering what previously was hidden, is recalled in positively Homeric language.

And one resignation whets the appetite for another. There is, therefore, very good reason why a government should attempt to apply the Aaronovitch rules to calls for ministerial self-slaughter. Why, indeed, Geoffrey Robinson has been allowed to hold on until now, despite the periodic and frequent appearance of stories alleging minor past misdemeanours. Blair has, since becoming Prime Minister, been determined not to give the press what they want, not to drop body parts into the piranha tank.

So why then, has Mandelson gone now and so suddenly? Jack Cunningham, the Government's sleek enforcer, was yesterday at pains to stress that his ex-colleague had committed no sin, save error. How can the oh-so-tough Blair administration allow one of its two or three most valuable ministers to be pushed out of office merely for exhibiting "poor judgement"?

One explanation may, of course, be that there is - in there somewhere - a dark little secret waiting to come out, whose disclosure is pre-empted by the resignation. But I doubt it. I do not



DAVID AARONOVITCH

It is still not clear to me what Mandelson has done that renders him unfit to serve in government

think that Peter Mandelson is in any way corrupt, though I admit that I've known the man for 22 years, and therefore would probably be the last to find out.

This being the case, Mr Mandelson's resignation acquires a slightly noble aspect. He could maybe have toughed it out a bit longer, but his judgement was that such obstinacy would have done his PM and "the project" a vast amount of damage. In front of his eyes must have swum the terrifying image of Mellor Reduced, a private affair that was to become a soup of football shirts, sucked toes and family snapshots, and culminated in the eventual pretext of the undeclared holiday taken at the villa of Ms Mona Bauwens.

We all have a Mona Bauwens somewhere, if we are investigated with suf-

ficient rigour. The political system in the United States, with its unashamed big-business bankrolling of senators and congressmen, still rejected a series of presidential nominees for high office because they had failed properly to declare their nannies' incomes to the tax authorities.

So we're down to the fact that, as Mandelson knew, the house business just looked bad. The scale of the loan was too large for it to be dismissed as a simple - and repayable - act of kindness (though the argument that it would suffice to buy 20 houses in Hartlepool is not convincing. Frankly, people would be likely to ask what the lender wanted out of such a large advance).

It may have been for this very reason that Peter did not tell Tony about the arrangement. He knew that it was not a corrupt deal, and that he had shown Mr Robinson no favours when counselling the PM about what to do with the Paymaster General. But he also must have realised, if he thought about it for five seconds, that this is not what others would believe. Yesterday's letter of resignation contains this passage: "We came to power promising to uphold the highest possible standards in public life. We have not just to do so but we must be seen to do so." That is not, presumably, a conclusion that Mr Mandelson first reached in the long watches of Tuesday night.

In fact, he now acknowledges not only that he should have told the PM and his own Permanent Secretary of his arrangements, but that the original loan was itself a mistake. This ad-

mission, and his prompt resignation, should separate him from the desperate, last-ditch denials of the last Conservative government. Peter Lilley's denunciation of Mandelson's "hanging on to office" was, for those with memories, one of the two comic highlights of the day. (The other was the greeting of the news in Mr Mandelson's constituency with the words, "this is a dark day for Hartlepool".)

That, however, is not the end of the story. There is a very big lesson here for New Labour; and it is one that they should learn from their friends before their enemies teach it to them in a much more unpalatable way. It is one thing to lose the ancient contempt and hatred felt by the left for wealth creators and the rich. It is quite another to adopt an unthinking admiration for the ways of the wealthy. Tax avoidance, though legal, is not admirable. The rich may be genuinely charitable, but they also use their wealth to purchase influence, much as I use working for *The Independent* as a convenient threat against tardy officials and inefficient companies. The endowed hardly know themselves that this is what they are about.

In other words, you can be wrong without doing wrong. That sense, not fear of the press, should inform the actions of ministers. Like Cecil Parkinson, Peter Mandelson will be back, for he has done the honourable thing. But the health of the Government (a government that this country still wants to see succeed) depends on maintaining a higher degree of humility than some of its members have shown. They surely know this now.

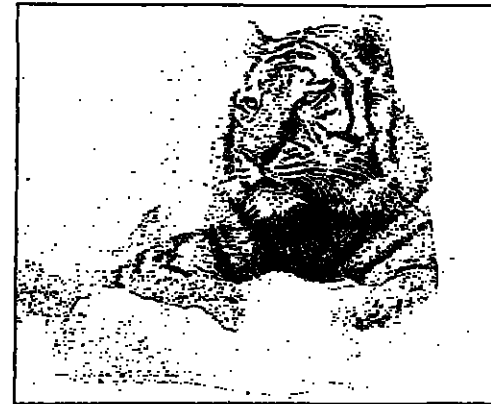
QUOTE OF THE DAY

"I do not believe that I have done anything improper. But I should not have entered into the arrangement."
Peter Mandelson MP

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"Courage is the price that Life exacts for granting peace."
Amelia Earhart, aviation pioneer

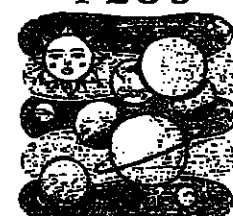
THIS WEEK IN THE INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY



Blue Tigers: a short story by Jorge Luis Borges.
Published in Britain for the first time

Labour: it can only get worse, by Siôn Simon

PLUS



Love life, money, work: your year ahead with the stars

MONITOR

ALL THE NEWS OF THE WORLD
The Chinese press considers the recent jailing of two dissidents

THE TRIALS can only strengthen those who view the mainland warily, and underline the importance of maintaining the Hong Kong system with its freedoms that have so clearly been put off-limits on the mainland. Internationally, the sentences have embarrassed those Western leaders who have been keenest on expanding and deepening relations with China. The extremely narrow view of national security reflected in these sentences

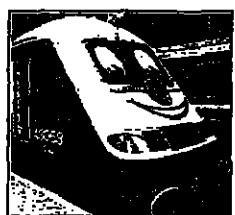
will not serve anybody's interests, including those of the central government.
South China Morning Post

THE SEVERE punishment of prominent dissident Xu Wenli will incur a cost. The trial has aroused international attention because we not only care about the fate of the dissidents, we also care whether Peking can fulfil the promise of the UN human rights treaties. Now the dissidents are in jail and

Peking has failed to fulfil the promise. The new open and enlightened image she has just built up will be affected. In the long term, this is a high cost.
Ming Pao, China

CHINA HAS tried hard to build a more open-minded image, shown in its signing of a human rights treaty. Though mainland leaders today hold a more open attitude towards dissidents, they would choose to send them to jail in the case of their authority being challenged. In balancing the conservative force inside the Communist Party, Jiang Zemin has to be careful in order to avoid chaos. We believe the mainland will be able to catch up with Taiwan's democratic development and enhance prospects for unification if Peking can have a more open attitude towards the dissidents.
Sing Tao, China

CHINA WILL, as always, improve human rights and conduct co-operation with other countries to push forward the healthy development of universal human rights. Those who say that China's reform and opening-up policy will be "reversed" and accuse China of "retrogression in political reform", based on their view of the case of Xu Wenli and a few others, are ignorant of China's human rights situation.
China Daily

RIGHT
OF REPLYCHRIS
TIBBITS

The managing director of Virgin Trains replies to our criticisms of their service.

YOUR PIECE, "Virgin's 148 days of no rail service" I feel gives a misleading review of void days.

A void day is when operators feel they are not providing an effective service to their passengers, and means that season ticket holders will automatically be given one day's extension to their season ticket.

An example of this year when severe infrastructure problems at Rugby and Camden, combined with the failure of another operator's service and severe weather conditions in the North-west resulted in very few Virgin trains being on time.

It should be noted that all these events are beyond our control. However, we at Virgin Trains take responsibility for our passengers and provide compensation and most of the cost of extending season tickets.

Until the introduction of our new Passengers Charter on 6 December the only mechanism open to Virgin Trains for making recompense to season ticket holders for poor service was to declare a void day.

To look after its customers, Virgin Trains has given a liberal interpretation of the application of this method which is agreed with the Office of the Rail Franchise Operator (Opra) and operated previously under British Rail.

Recompense to other customers is made when individual applications are submitted as a result of disrupted service.

The headline in *The Independent* was particularly misleading. The total is not as illustrated, where they add the results of two separate franchises together, and count the same delay several times. This situation arises as figures are published separately for void days on each of the three West Coast mainline routes. We do know that our performance could be better.

We are working with Railtrack to ensure a better service both in the near future and after our major investment in new track, signalling and trains.

What's the point if you do this to Muslims?



**YASMIN
ALIBHAI-BROWN**
*How will 13 million
European Muslims cope
with the ruthless policies
of Western governments?*

LAST SUNDAY, at noon, a Home Office official phoned asking if I could attend a meeting with ministers to talk about the bombings in Iraq and British race relations. A handful of Muslims had been invited. Having watched *House of Cards*, I assumed that this was one of those invitations that required total discretion, and that I must have become a somebody. At 4pm, a journalist called to ask whether I would be going. Another called minutes later (he wanted to know whether Jack Straw thought I was a member of some terrorist organisation). And then someone from *The Independent* called, by which time I felt that there was no sense in playing secrets any more. I explained that I would not attend the meeting because I was too upset to talk, and that my strong feelings of despair and rage would not help race relations in the meeting-room, let alone the country.

It was not a gesture, not a boycott, I believe Straw is committed to racial equality and I know Mike

party, about which I was not asked, when, (regrettably I am sure) some of our houses had to be burnt down. These are probably the sentiments of all Muslims living in the West today. Even a Muslim like me - Westernised, defective, full of sin, a vocal critic of much that is wrong in our communities and Islamic countries - cannot and will not support the recent actions against the poor, wretched people of Iraq.

As Robert Fisk wrote in this paper, the attacks represented "the final bankruptcy of Western policy" towards that once thriving country. One of the birthplaces of human civilisation, Iraq is now a place where researchers find that the children have lost their expectations of growing up.

I am affronted by the rhetoric of the Government, and told Derek Fatchett this on the PM programme on Radio 4. He fed me more self-serving platitudes in response. There was no meeting of words.

But this is not only about Iraq. It is about how we, the 13 million

European Muslims, are going to cope with the xenophobic, ruthless and thoughtless policies and actions of Western governments when they are dealing with Muslim countries. They do this without any consultation with us and without any understanding of how their own people (for that, whether they like it or not, is what we are) are likely to react.

Let us imagine the unimaginable for a moment. Suppose that the Israeli government got so outlandish, even by the generous standards which apply to it, that military action by the Western allies became necessary. Would this step be taken without long conversations into the night with prominent Jews? We know that the Irish presence in the United States has exerted enormous influence, for worse once and better now, on American politicians and the US government itself.

There is much talk in our country about the benefits of diversity. But as the late Barry Troyna, the leading academic of multi-culturalism, wrote, diversity is not only

about "saris, samosas and steel bands". Nor is it just about getting fat import orders from India or parading a black mayor through the streets of London. If politicians don't realise that we have a role to play in the foreign policies of this, our nation, they have not understood the changes in this country since 1948. How well can they then be expected to run a mature, complex, multi-ethnic democracy?

New Labour is beginning to stir on this. The Foreign Office has set up a panel of advisers which include people such as Zeinab Badawi and Wahid Ali. But there is still too much ignorance and arrogance in the corridors of power. What a waste of all our Muslim academics who see themselves as Muslims of the West, not of the East.

We British Muslims feel guilty about Iraq, but we also feel powerless. Since Bosnia and Kosovo, when our people (which is increasingly how we regard persecuted Muslims around the world, in spite of our differences) had to die be-

cause it was just too difficult to stop these things, our innermost fears are gathered around the spectre of a growing confrontation between Islam and the West.

Imagine then, our task as parents and educators, of persuading the brightest among our young that we must remain part of the democratic process; that there is no sense in being so angry that we make it easier for those who hate us to harm us; that separatist politics will do us no good. Young Muslim chemistry graduates are not building bombs in garages in Neasden or sending out application forms to Bin Laden, but they are increasingly questioning the wisdom of integration.

Another meeting which I did not attend this week was one organised by some Muslim students who want to create a structure which "has nothing to do with the lies about democracy and this anti-Muslim state". This should worry the Prime Minister, and if he wishes to converse I am available, now that I have stopped crying, any time, any place.

The truths that no Christmas card company would dare touch



**THE BISHOP
OF LIVERPOOL**
*A pregnant teenager
and a family of
asylum-seekers are the
characters of the carols*

"SILENT NIGHT" is one of the most atmospheric of carols. In spite of being synthesised and piped to death around shopping malls, it still has the power to send a tingle up the spine when heard in the candlelit stillness of a midnight service.

Tonight, streams of people will make their way from pub to church, complementing one Christmas spirit with another, for a service that is rapidly becoming more popular than Christmas Day.

Yet, for many, going through the doors of a church is like entering another world. The carols and the readings take you back in time. But they tell a story that has timeless themes. Mary, an unmarried pregnant teenager, faces a bleak future. Joseph rescues her by means of a hasty marriage. The baby is born in difficult circumstances, which are made worse by the murdering of hundreds of local children. The family is forced to flee the country and seek asylum elsewhere. The fact that this child turns out to be the Son of God does not immunise him or them from the dangers of life.

A pregnant teenager, abused children, a family of asylum-seekers - these are the characters of the ancient carols. But I doubt that they would ever get through the marketing department of a Christmas card company. Not even charities that espouse these causes would dare risk their lucrative sales by using such cruel images. But that's the story of Jesus with merry cards is as wide of the mark as remembering the massacre of Dunblane with a celebrity party captured in a photo-shoot by a glossy magazine.

It's the cruelty that makes the story so real and modern. Cynics have always cast doubt on the historical reliability of the Nativity stories. But the fantasy belongs to the commercial hype, not to the original story. Even the episode of angels visiting the shepherds has a ring of truth about it. In the first century

shepherds were notorious for fiddling the books - selling a few of their boss's sheep and blaming the wolves of the night. So bad was their reputation that they weren't allowed to give evidence in a court of law. Why would Luke, so keen to get his gospel accepted by sceptics, make up such a line if it didn't have its root in fact? In today's world it would be like angels making the announcement to a convention of used-car salesmen. Shepherds had the same problem. In fact, God sending his messengers to such a bunch of outsiders and social outcasts was exactly the message he wanted to get over to the world. There's nobody beyond the pale. Shepherds, used-car salesmen, pregnant teenagers, the abused and the abuser, asylum seekers, all lie within the circumference of his love.

This is disconcerting for us who prefer to put people into boxes. We like to give everybody a category. Then you're either in or out. Social exclusion is not a new phenomenon. All the signs of the first Christmas are that God commits himself to a grand plan of social inclusion.

A pregnant teenager? In. A distressed shepherd? In. An anxious asylum seeker? In. Even the dis-

tinguished strangers from the East come bringing a message of inclusiveness along with their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. They are the first to worship Jesus. Foreigners and Orientals are in the vanguard to acknowledge the worth of this Jewish child. It is significant that this episode is recorded exclusively by Matthew. He is at pains to point out at every turn that Jesus is the fulfilment of all the Jewish prophecies about the coming of the Messiah. Matthew wanted to convince his own that Jesus was the Messiah and seems to shoot himself in the foot by relating that the primary witnesses to his birth were not kosher Jews but Orientals.

Again, it's difficult to know why this was put in if it did not happen, for it added nothing to Matthew's case. Yet even though it may have been difficult for his readers to accept, this episode of the Nativity shows the God of Abraham and Moses using people beyond traditional and territorial boundaries. He is, after all, a God without frontiers. *Dieu sans frontières*.

As Jesus grew up and embarked on his public ministry he was forever undermining and subverting the categories that made people feel safe. His practice of including those who were excluded made him look like a walking, personified Social Inclusion Unit. You name it and he included it.

A leper, whose rotting flesh barred him from the community, he touched with the silky grace of Diana. A prostitute, whose sexuality was seized by money not love, he allowed to touch his own body. A Samaritan, who to his audience had all the kudos of an American in Iraq, he saluted for his compassion. An tax collector, filthy rich from exacting and extracting money from his own people to fill the coffers of a despised and occupying dictatorship, he befriended. Is it any wonder that they could not cope with this subversive and unpredictable mercy



A detail from the Adoration of the Magi (1598) by Jan Brueghel the Elder

venturer? The only way they could handle him was to manhandle him on to a cross. In all their dealings with him and through all their questioning of him as to who was in or out of God's Kingdom, included or excluded, they could not nail him down, so they nailed his body to wood to silence the questions with which he answered theirs.

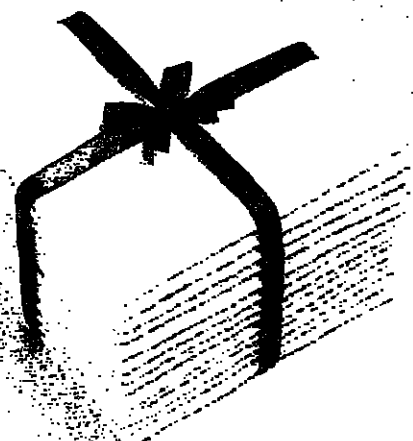
It disturbed them that forgiveness was the word that was often on his lips. It was always in his heart. He could call a spade a spade and Herod a fox and religious leaders

hypocrites. He could preach hell-fire with all the vim of Ian Paisley. But he could never hide that gut-wrenching compassion that always embraced the outsider. There was nobody beyond the pale of God's love. The least, the last and the lost - these were his priority.

To save them was his mission. That's why he was born into this world. That's what his name, "Jesus", means. "God saves". He rescues the outsider, the outcast, the excluded. He also exposes the truth that we're all both agents and vic-

tims of exclusion through what we say and do to one another. We all need rescuing. That's why the Christmas story of God's grand plan of inclusion acted out in Jesus Christ is good news; not just for a pregnant teenager and an asylum-seeking family but for all the world on this silent and holy night.

*Silent night! Holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light;
Radiant beams thy holy face
With the dawn of saving grace,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth,
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth.*

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IND987

PANDORA

ALL APPEARS not to be well in the joint restaurant empire of Marco Pierre White and the Granada group, since they launched a joint venture last year. Suspicions were raised when people wishing to book for the Grill Room at the Café Royal found staff hesitant to take bookings, or were referred to another of White's restaurants, the Oak Room. Moreover, a rumour has been circulating that a number of Grill Room staff were dismissed earlier this week. A call to the publicity department of Forte Hotels, the relevant arm of Granada, solicited a prepared statement: "Both joint-venture parties are currently reviewing the positioning of the Grill Room and considering various opportunities for the restaurant in future."

Unfortunately, Pandora's attempts to contact Marco to discuss the future of the Grill Room met with no response.

I'm stunned," spluttered Haslam. "I'm so stunned I don't really know what to say." With that, Nicky made his excuses and rang off. Perhaps Haslam could cheer Mandy up by doing a spot of interior re-designing at his Notting Hill abode?

ONE BURNING question that arises from Mandy's resignation is what will happen to his faithful servant Benjamin Weg-Prosser. Oofy, as he is endearingly known, would surely not relish being lumbered with a low-key role, any more than his boss would. So how will the dozen of so many newspaper columnists, who have no doubt enjoyed

dealing with him as much as Pandora has, survive? Oofy. Oofy. give Pandora a call; let us know you're all right.

DO YOU believe in Santa? Well, if you work for Harrods then it is important that you do. How important this is was demonstrated a few weeks ago when a photographer colleague of Pandora's called the Harrods press office to ask for some shots of their own Santa. "As long as you realise it is the real Father Christmas," the Harrods PR woman warned. Despite the photographer informing her that he no longer believed in Santa, she persisted with the fantasy act. When the photographer asked if it would be all right to snap their Santa having a cup of tea, the PR replied: "Oh no, he has a magic dust in his pockets, so he doesn't need to have a tea break." Ho, Ho, Ho.

THE IMPEACHMENT of President Clinton has proved a real boon to bars on both sides of the Atlantic. Tuffy Vetter, a bar manager of the Daily Grill in Washington, has named a new cocktail after the crisis. "Impeachment" - half peach schnapps and half white crème de menthe. But Tuffy is not alone. Janet Evans, owner of Janet's Bar in South Kensington, has produced her own version, the "Impeach" - peach schnapps, orange juice and cream. "It's washed down with a Monica Lewinsky chaser," Evans told Pandora.

PANDORA HEARS that the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, has recently been the victim of a misunderstanding. Dining at a restaurant outside Cardiff a few weeks ago, Prescott asked the waitress for some "asparagus tips". Unfortunately, the waitress in question was just moving away from the table when Prescott made his request, and therefore didn't quite understand what the Deputy Prime Minister was saying. When she returned to the table, she informed him: "I'm sorry, we've only got Benson & Hedges."

DILEMMAS
WITH VIRGINIA IRONSIDE

I want to avoid a family Christmas

Geraldine is dreading Christmas because her stepfather bullies her mother – although her mother doesn't appear to mind – and he organises Christmas differently from the way it was done when her father was alive. Her brother's children also make her feel poignantly aware of her single, childless status. Could she be 'ill', and avoid the occasion?

VIRGINIA'S ADVICE

I DON'T think I've met anyone this year who isn't dreading Christmas. Is it the ghastly build-up and the knowledge that however nice our Christmases are, they're unlikely to live up to the standard presented by the media? Is it the fact that as you get older someone is nearly always missing from the Christmas scene – a divorced father, a dead parent? Is it the poignant memory of wonderful Christmases past that can never be recaptured? Is it the memory of stressful childhood Christmases?

Because my great-aunt was also my headmistress, my parents and I used to have gloomy Christmas lunches at a long, greasy, school trestle table in the dismal school dining-room, with nothing to drink but a jug of water. Afterwards I would be given an improving book about architecture, unwrapped.

cover herself with protective emotional spray and spend at least Christmas lunch, if nothing else, with her family? Christmas, even though the majority of us forget it or couldn't give a pin, is basically a religious festival. When we're in deep trouble, most of us, even non-believers, find ourselves automatically sending up a prayer to someone. Keeping this someone in mind for a couple of hours once a year is surely, if nothing else, insurance. Then, there is the family. We all bemoan the death of the family, but by coping out we're adding to

the rot. Blood is thicker than water and however much we loathe our relations, most of them will rally round us in time of trouble, just out of duty if nothing else. It's worth touching base once a year. Christmas is a time when you have to give presents – yes, even to people you can't stand, and even to people who have everything. But giving and receiving from people you dislike is good for the soul, even if you're cursing underneath.

So this year Geraldine should go, remembering that Christmases past can never be recreated, and that if her mother doesn't mind the way her husband treats her, then it's none of Geraldine's business to get angry about it. Who knows, her mum may have a masochistic streak and secretly get turned on by being ordered about. And if Geraldine feels lonely and barren when faced with her nephews and nieces, she should remember that their little lives are enriched by the presence of a kindly aunt. Maybe they'll barely talk to her, but she should be there partly for their sake, to add to their feeling of security that they have a big loving family around them.

But there is a way out, and although it's too late for Geraldine to employ it now, she should plan it for next year. She should hold Christmas for the family at her house. She should also invite a polite friend as a "bulking agent". I have often been used at family Christmases as a kind of Fyogel, simply because a stranger's presence makes everyone behave themselves. The stepfather will not dream of bullying the mother, Geraldine can have Christmas "her" way, and rather than feel like a sad little spinster, she will feel like a powerful hostess.

READERS' SUGGESTIONS

Make a deal with your mother
I really sympathise with Geraldine. As a manager in a London department store, the last thing I want to do is drive 150 miles to spend less than 48 hours with my mother and sisters and their children – who are naturally quite a handful. Unfortunately my parents separated a few years ago, which made the decision to spend Christmas in London much more difficult. Geraldine should make a deal with her mother. What I do now is spend a weekend at the beginning of December with my mother doing Christmas shopping and spending time together. We both enjoy it and look forward to seeing each other at this time.
JEREMY EATON
London SE10

way of living together now that the children have left home and I respect their right to do so; but at the moment it seems to consist of the two of them constantly bickering in a way that makes spending time with them stressful. This makes me think every year about not going home for "the day itself" but, it seems, only having a family of your own gives you the cast-iron right to spend Christmas by yourself. In the end I will be going, and I think I would advise Geraldine to go too. For me, buying loads of presents that give people pleasure, having a few drinks, helping with the cooking and a dose of teeth-gritting are worth it for my mother to be able to say to her friends that she is "having the whole family over at Christmas".
ANONYMOUS

friends this year. She doesn't have to say she hates her family Christmas, just that she owes it to her friends. Yes, her mother will be upset – mine was when I dropped the "family" Christmas 23 years ago, but she soon got over it and I now have the Christmas I

choose (with my partner) without the tyranny of fractious nephews and nieces, grumpy aunts and uncles, or enforced eating and drinking. Go for it, Geraldine – break loose: you will not regret it!
ADAM WATSON
London WC1

Compromise is best
Be honest, resolute and prepared to compromise. Tell your mother that you wish to spend Christmas in your own home this year, but will visit them either immediately before or after. You could send flowers – and telephone on Christmas morning. Doing this confirms you are part of the family (warts and all), but are also breaking free of a gathering that causes you stress.
AIDREY ROTHERHAM
Surbiton, Surrey



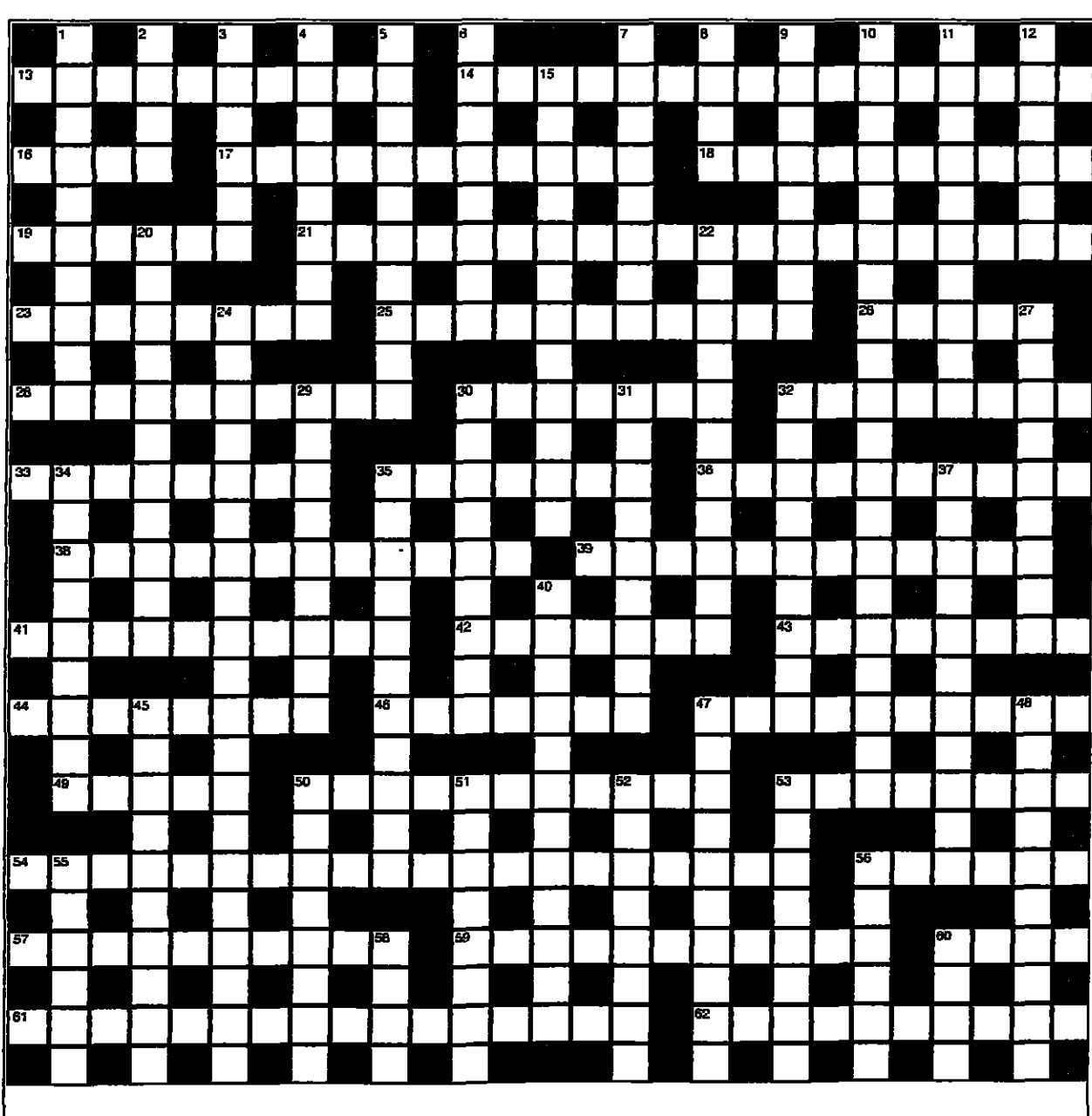
NEXT WEEK'S DILEMMA

Dear Virginia, I am a single man of 30. I have the occasional girlfriend and once I was in love and wanted to get married, but it didn't work out. I have a good friend, a single woman of my own age, and we spend a lot of time together. Recently, however, she's hinted that she wants the relationship to be sexual. She insists it is just sex she is after, nothing more. I find her quite attractive, and in some ways this would suit me, but I don't love her, and I worry that sex might destroy our friendship. She says we're old enough not to let that happen. What do you think?
Yours sincerely, Max

Anyone who has advice quoted will be sent a bouquet from Lucifera. Please send letters and dilemmas to Virginia Ironside, 'The Independent', 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL; fax 0171-293 2182; e-mail dilemmas@independent.co.uk – giving a postal address for the bouquet

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS JUMBO CROSSWORDS
CRYPTIC CLUES

- Across**
- 13 Monstrous creature with unexpected urban roots (10)
 - 14 No turning back? But good man turns, after consideration (2,6,8)
 - 17 Group of soldiers involved in munitions (4)
 - 18 Another newspaper carries important information of moment? (4-7)
 - 19 Yarn about ill bred dramatist (10)
 - 21 One may get fee after penning article curtailed from lack of interest (6)
 - 23 Cs and Ms formed by cake decorations? (8,3,9)
 - 25 US musical creating stir in US state (8)
 - 26 Exhumed dead – isn't accepting one made a mistake (11)
 - 28 Old doctor giving shelter to children (5)
 - 29 Studies crime as crime? (10)
 - 30 Contrivances of French crimes (7)
 - 32 World is blurry, unknown, through half-closed eyes? (8)
 - 33 Suspend activities of professional crook (8)
 - 35 Lawsuit involving scoundrel falls (7)
 - 36 Charge on bond about to come down (10)
 - 38 Hand over film for developing in Welsh port (7,5)
 - 39 The manufacture of clothing could be addictive (5-7)
 - 41 Place ship around front of smart turn out (10)
 - 42 Wobbly sea-legs, always the same (7)
 - 43 United leading the way amongst division's newly-promoted teams? (8)
 - 44 Long jail sentence a blow? Here's support for those floundering (8)
 - 46 Unionist, leading one, having a new ideal (7)
 - 47 Marijuana in powdery heap – mind! (6,3)
- Down**
- 1 \$1000 – and keep it quiet – gets you facilities for key players (5,5)
 - 2 Speed heading for Kendall's rising 100 mph (4)
 - 3 US writer to attempt a particular genre (6)
 - 4 Indian burial ground unlikely to be attacked by cowboys? (3,5)
 - 5 Now it's Christmas? (7-3)
 - 6 Western heroines dress up in hoods (3-5)
 - 7 Footwear adds something decorative to a girl (3-5)
 - 8 It's responsibility, working with our people (4)
 - 9 Looked around church, though not informally (8)
 - 10 Irish play – but it's the English, with an inch to spare! (4,5,5,6)
 - 11 Encourage those attacking the undergrowth with choppers (3-7)
 - 12 Retained a hint of temperance (though very flushed externally) (6)



- 15 Observe the loud sound of the birds from Norway? (12)
- 20 Fastening for bags? Arranged closure during journey (7-4)
- 22 Artists, as it were, in a desperate state (4,7)
- 24 Negro spiritual presented as jazz with a touch of blues – very pleasant – No. 10 in hit parade (5,3,5,7)
- 27 See Henry escape in the dusk (4-5)
- 29 Change the last word (editor's No.2 intended to ditch article) (9)
- 30 Bandit the subject of a hunt – business involving heads of Special Police (9)
- 31 A case near to labour? This may ensue (9)
- 32 Surprise name given to institute after receiving millions (9)
- 34 Hanging on to make circuit around Eastern ocean (9)
- 35 Pass round a sink that's a fuel container (4,7)
- 37 Respond to 'A penny for your thoughts?' (4,1,6)
- 40 Unbridled cavalry I deem reckless (5-3-4)
- 45 All over the gazetteer? (10)
- 47 Discourtesy in business centre involving one largely despicable (10)
- 48 Historical period revealing wizards grasping conundrum? Not right (8,4)
- 50 Vigorous American twice imprisoned for twenty-four hours (8)
- 51 Married existence allowed to be sent up in broadcast (8)
- 52 Delivers works of a reflective nature (8)
- 53 Singer? Mean to bring in one with grand style (8)
- 55 Handsome young man with a head of hair, attracting love (6)
- 56 Religious academic has raised a central point about founder of religion (6)
- 58 Skilful, pert... (4)
- 60 ...and almost rich (4)

By Phi CONCISE CLUES

- Across**
- 13 Fool (10)
 - 14 Inexperienced (3,6,3,4)
 - 16 Only fair? (4)
 - 17 Friendship (11)
 - 18 Cave-dweller (10)
 - 19 Short piano pieces (6)
 - 21 Poem by Keats (2,5,4,4,5)
 - 23 In a chilly manner (8)
 - 25 Initial use of weaponry (5,6)
 - 26 Woodwind instruments (5)
 - 28 In the manner of a march (mus.) (4,6)
 - 30 Strong-smelling (7)
 - 32 With resentment (8)
 - 33 Fair-skinned fellow (5,3)
 - 35 Mosque feature (7)
 - 36 Stomach-turning (10)
 - 38 Biology, etc. (4,8)
 - 39 Essex woods (6,6)
 - 41 Campanologist (4-6)
 - 42 In general (7)
 - 43 Member of a small ruling class (8)
 - 44 Puns, etc. (8)
 - 46 Sonnet or symphony, say (3,4)
 - 47 Corridor (10)
 - 49 Follow (5)
 - 50 Cursory remarks (6,5)
 - 53 Large breed of dog (8)
 - 54 Almost is not good enough (1,4,2,2,4,2,1,4)
 - 56 Prison (4-2)
 - 57 Superfluous item (10)
 - 59 Town in Dorset (11)
 - 60 Weak (4)
 - 61 Proof of age (5,11)
 - 62 Superman's city (10)
- Down**
- 1 Showing the effects of two sets of traditions (10)
 - 2 Aberdonian, say (4)
 - 3 Frowned-upon punishment for children (6)
 - 4 Usual state (U.S.) (8)
 - 5 Light musical drama (5,5)
 - 6 Someone with idle thumbs? (8)
 - 7 Pertinent (8)
 - 8 Present (4)
 - 9 Lawyer (8)
 - 10 Novel by James Fenimore Cooper (3,4,2,3,8)
 - 11 Interfering (10)
 - 12 Reviewer (6)
 - 15 300th anniversary (12)
 - 20 Unpleasant (11)
 - 22 Dealing with life (11)
 - 24 It won't stand up in court (12,8)
 - 27 Irritable (9)
 - 29 With slyness (9)
 - 30 Whit (9)
 - 31 What's produced by medium (9)
 - 32 Middle-class (9)
 - 34 E.g. the Christmas rose (9)
 - 35 Telepathy (4-7)
 - 37 Healing (11)
 - 40 No. 2 (6,6)
 - 45 Coverings during decorating (4-6)
 - 47 Very softly (10)
 - 48 Literary assistant (10)
 - 50 Building containing fruit-trees (8)
 - 51 Self-centred (8)
 - 52 Location of a French cathedral (8)
 - 53 Sufficient (8)
 - 55 Tightwad (6)
 - 56 Remained in hiding (3,3)
 - 58 Understand (4)
 - 60 Game requiring a table (4)

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William Gaddis

WILLIAM GADDIS was among the most important of the new American novelists to appear after the Second World War. He was also among the most undervalued – perhaps not surprisingly, for his work, encyclopaedic, anagrammatic, intricately carpentered and constructed, was never to every taste.

Perhaps it was unfortunate that his first novel, *The Recognitions* (1955), a 956-page tour de force on fraudulence, counterfeiting, and the deceptions of art and religion, with a cast of some 50 characters, appeared in the 1950s. It was not a time given to literary experiment, and the book was subjected to much hostile reviewing – “a sobering experience”, reflected Gaddis.

But it did find its own band of readers, was passed from hand to hand among students, deeply admired by fellow authors (Bellow, Doctorow), celebrated by Tony Tanner in his masterly 1971 study of modern American fiction, *City of Words*. Finally it came to be seen as perhaps the first “postmodern” novel, a forerunner of the fiction of Thomas Pynchon and John Barth.

Possibly because of the poor press response to his first novel, Gaddis took 20 more years to produce his second, *J.R.* (1975), a satirical comedy about an 11-year-old high-school boy who learns the rules of speculation and becomes a successful capitalist, exploiting the games that money lets us play.

Again, the book is massive, centred around a notion of extreme conspiracy, and deeply concerned with linguistic and lexical codes. The novel's first word is “Money” – “spoken in a voice that rustled” – and money is the interconnective tissue of this vast, sprawling, manipulating world. Language itself is manipulated, and the book belongs to that body of fictional fiction where the nature of language, codes and discourse is always under test. Modern information theory, cybernetics, is used to code and structure the novel – a game of “noise” and silence. This time the novel was well received, earning its author the National Book Award.

Ten years later Gaddis produced *Carpenter's Gothic* (1985) – a book whose title said much about the nature of his work. “Carpenter's Gothic” is an American style of domestic architecture where grand European designs are adapted and re-

carpentered for more humble circumstances, producing “a patchwork of conceits, borrowings, deceptions”. It was a fair description of his own favour, for the novel exploits many of the generic aspects of Gothic and sensational fiction without ceasing to have an air of parody. Gaddis's parody was intensely serious, however, his theme being the corruption – political, artistic, financial, and linguistic – of the modern American world in its age of hyper-reality. At this time, Penguin reissued all his books in paperback.

Since then Gaddis produced one further book, *A Frolic of His Own* (1994). As J.R. begins with the word “Money”, this begins with the word “Justice?”, and is an elaborate comedy of the role of the law and legislation in American society. This book has an increased topicality now

The title of the novel said much about the nature of his work. 'Carpenter's Gothic' is an American style of architecture adapting grand European designs for more humble circumstances

that the American legal system has succeeded in allowing a small incident in an Arkansas hotel to develop, through a series of ever more absurd accusations and claims for restitution, into the grounds of impeaching a president. “Every profession is a conspiracy against the public,” Gaddis writes wryly, “every profession protects itself with a language of its own.”

Gaddis's themes have been central to modern American fiction in the age of Pynchon, Barth and



The author of perhaps the first 'postmodern' novel – *The Recognitions*, 1955

DeLillo; he has been a major experimental writer who, over time, has greatly influenced many. Yet there was always a sense in which his own work was a frolic of his own, to some degree protected by a language of its own.

William Gaddis had strong literary credentials. Born to an affluent family in New York City, he went to Harvard and, like so many American writers, edited *The Harvard Lampoon*. But a drunken brawl ended his university career, and he

went to work for the *New Yorker*. He then travelled a good deal in Latin America, settled in Greenwich Village (where he knew the “Beats”), then worked in Spain and Paris as a freelance author and speech-writer.

At various times he worked for American international corporations and witnessed American intervention in foreign lands, something that earned his satirical rage. Behind Gaddis's language experiments, his game-plans, his clever ironies, there was always a po-

litical bitterness and a battle against the inauthentic. He was a man of great charm, wit and intelligence. Before he died, William Gaddis had completed another novel, *Agape*. His was an unusual but a major literary career, and one hopes it will earn him full recognition.

MALCOLM BRADBURY

William Gaddis, writer: born New York 29 December 1922; died East Hampton, New York 16 December 1998.

Bill Gregson

DURING THE 1960s and 1970s, at the time of the White Heat of the technological revolution, a number of industrialists – who never revealed their personal voting preferences – were of great help to the Wilson opposition, the 1964-70 government, and the 1974-79 government. Such a one was Bill Gregson of Ferranti, champion of computer-controlled machine tools, who later became deputy chairman of the British Airports Authority (1975-85).

Gregson was outstandingly influential with politicians, partly on account of his ability to put incisive questions, and to offer practical ways of addressing complex problems and moving forward. He not only posed questions but repeatedly came up with sensible answers. He was a man of technological vision.

He came of a family of colliery agents, who owned the engineering firm of Smith and Gregson, which was nationalised in 1948. He was always grateful for the education he received, particularly in mathematics and physics, at King William's College on the Isle of Man. After a period at Faraday House Engineering College he joined the RAF in 1941 and, such was his skill in the communications field, he rose to be a squadron leader by the time he was 24.

His wartime experience led to the position of technical sales manager of Ferranti in Edinburgh in 1946, and after five years he was promoted to the same job in London which he occupied until 1959. Returning to Scotland as assistant general manager of the huge Pilton plant, he was involved in the many controversies which surrounded Ferranti's contracts at that time.

My first encounters with him were extremely sharp. He was angry that I had suggested to the Public Accounts Committee, of which I was a very junior member, that Ferranti ought to be brought before them to examine the Bloodhound project, the missile on which Ferranti's were alleged to have made huge profits and as a result of which Basil de Ferranti was hauled before the Public Accounts Committee of the House of Commons and required to give some money back to the Treasury.

Gregson thought that raw politicians ought to understand that companies should make healthy profits on one military development project in order to have the wherewithal to finance other projects military and civil. However his personal relations were extremely good and like others with whom he had clashed I became a firm, lifelong friend.

Gregson was extremely active in the British Electrotechnical and Allied Manufacturers Associations (Beama), and its president in 1983-84. Gordon Gaddis, Director-General of Beama from 1982 to 1985, describes him as “charming, incisive, determined and deeply committed. I remember especially one contribution he made which reflected his influence and persuasiveness and lasted for several years. ‘Gordon,’ he said, ‘You need presidents from the very top of our industry.’”

He then invited the leaders of the engineering industry to dinner at the Café Royal and the level of acceptance was, remembers Gaddis “surprisingly high”. The chairman and chief executives alike agreed with Gregson when challenged to take up his mantle. Later, in succession, Beama presidents were to include Sir William Barlow, chairman of the Post Office and BICC, Viscount Weir of G.J. Weir and Co pump manufacturers, the Hon Geoffrey Wilson, chairman of Delta, Sir Terence Harrison, chairman and chief executive of Rolls Royce, and Sir Robert Davidson of GEC Alsthom – “all”, says Gaddis, “as a result of Gregson's dinner”.

Outside Ferranti, where he had a



Letting managers manage

good relationship with Sir Donald McCallum, his contemporary and general manager, Gregson was a director of British Telecom Scotland (1977-85), of Anderson Strathclyde, the coalmine equipment manufacturers, of Brammer, electronic engineers (1978-88), and of East of Scotland Industrial Investments. He was consultant to ICI and also found time to be the chairman of the Scottish General Practitioners Support Unit (1971-79) and deputy chairman of the Scottish Council for Development and Industry.

I record this sample of his various positions to indicate that he was a man who had a finger in every industrial pie north of the border – and with benevolent effect. Perhaps Vernon Murphy, now the Director of the Scottish Airports Authority and as a young man Director of Aberdeen Airport puts his finger on why Gregson was so effective:

“The wonderful contribution which Bill made to the business of Scottish airports was that he played an active role using his wide experience of Scottish business in discussing and advising on issues, without ever straying over the divide of letting managers manage. That is somewhat unusual in people of his elevated position.”

“He applied this to all levels of the business, and took a particular interest in the so-called outlying areas, the Highlands and Islands and Aberdeen.”

It is indeed a rare quality among businessmen talking to politicians not to be hectoring and Gregson's questions, smile and chuckle were more effective than any amount of hectoring and lecturing. I think it was this sensitivity to other people's difficulties which endeared him to successive Secretaries of State for Scotland, particularly the late Willie Ross, who thought Gregson was one of his most valuable advisers.

Gregson spent a great deal of time as a board member of Livingston New Town between 1968 and 1976, years when I was constituency Member of Parliament for two-fifths of Livingston. Seeing him at close quarters he was extraordinarily persuasive in securing overseas investment, particularly from the United States.

The late Herb Allen, who was to bring the Cameron Ironworks – to be the biggest forge in Europe – to Livingston at the start of the North Sea oil industry, confided that one of the reasons that he had come to Livingston with his huge and welcome investment was that his grandfather had been a shale miner in West Lothian and the other was the transparent technical competence and realism of the industrial board member Bill Gregson.

On the national level Gregson's contribution was through the National Economic Development Office, and particularly its committees on industrial strategies in the late 1970s. He was always conscious of the importance of automation and was chairman of the Machine-tool Expert Committee, 1969-70. He was also conscious of the importance of design and was a member of the Design Council, 1980-85. He had esoteric interests which led him to be a commissioner of the Northern Lighthouse Board for 15 years, 1975-80.

Bill Gregson was the obverse of the scientist engineer simply interested in his own field. For eight years he was a director of the Scottish National Orchestra, becoming its vice-chairman in 1981 and its chairman in a difficult period, 1984-85. Veronica Gibson, widow of Sir Alexander Gibson, the SNO's great conductor, recalls: “Alec found Bill Gregson a charming man, with a deep knowledge of music, and a most supportive and helpful chairman.” Anyone invited to a happy home made for Gregson by Rosalind, his wife, who died in 1994, would be amazed at his still in automating his residence and in the forgotten art of cabinet-making with his own hands.

Raymond Williamson, chairman of the orchestra for the last decade, said: “Bill Gregson played a vital role in encouraging sponsorship without which we would not have had the financial support to develop.”

TAM DALYELL

William Derek Hadfield Gregson, electronic engineer: born Stockport, Lancashire 27 January 1920; assistant general manager, Ferranti (Scotland) 1959-83; CBE 1970; Deputy Chairman, British Airports Authority 1975-85; married 1944 Rosalind Reeves (died 1994; three sons, one daughter); died Edinburgh 15 December 1998.

Hrair Maroukhian

HRAIR MAROUKHIAN headed the leading political party in the Armenian diaspora for nearly a quarter of a century.

The Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), or Dashnak party, is not only a political party, but a way of life for its members, particularly in the diaspora communities of the Middle East, from where Maroukhian came, and in the United States. Besides its political activities, the party runs a series of newspapers, social clubs, youth groups and scouting organisations, and has strong influence over parts of the Armenian Church.

By the 1970s, when Maroukhian was elected chairman of the party's highest body, the Bureau – a position to which he was re-elected six times – the party was a rather timid shadow of its former self, rooted in its Middle Eastern setting. Maroukhian transformed it into an aggressive anti-Turkish body waging a world-wide campaign to force Turkey to admit guilt for the massacres of more than one million Armenians in Anatolia and the expulsion of almost the entire Armenian community in the Ottoman Empire in the early years of this century.

Accused by the Turks of being the sponsors of terrorist attacks on Turkish diplomats from the mid-1970s, the Dashnaks always distanced themselves from Armenian terror groups. However, as late as 1993 Maroukhian was denied entry to Canada, as the authorities there suspected the party of links to



the perpetrators of two attacks on Turkish targets in Canada in the early 1980s.

The ARF – founded in Tiflis in 1890 – was always an alliance of strong nationalists and revolutionary socialists. Maroukhian was a strong ideologue who defended the party's socialist identity, to the displeasure of some members who felt it should shed its socialist heritage.

True to its revolutionary origins, the ARF remained a secretive, conspiratorial party, suspicious of outsiders. It was banned by the Soviet authorities after they took power in Armenia in 1920 from the short-lived Dashnak-led government. The Dashnaks remained fiercely anti-Soviet until the early 1980s, when KGB infiltration and the changing international climate caused a re-

Maroukhian waged a world-wide campaign to force Turkey to admit guilt for the massacres of one million Armenians in Anatolia

think among senior ARF leaders, who were won over to the view that the Soviet Union had at least preserved Armenian identity and a piece of territory the Armenians could call their own.

The party revived its activities in Armenia in the late 1980s and – with national independence once again in sight – the ARF leadership officially relocated to Armenia in August 1990. Maroukhian was able to visit the country and engage in its volatile politics. The Dashnaks took a hard line in the conflict with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, an enclave whose Armenian majority were fighting for independence from Azerbaijan, and on Turkey.

Levon Ter-Petrosyan, who in 1991 became independent Armenia's first president, was increasingly intolerant of Dashnak criticism of his gov-

ernment. Such differences of opinion became even sharper when Maroukhian alleged that Ter-Petrosyan had acted as a KGB informer when he was a student. In June 1992 Ter-Petrosyan announced in a televised speech that he was expelling Maroukhian from Armenia and banned him from any future visits.

Maroukhian, by now a Greek citizen, was in Armenia awaiting the convention of the 25th ARF World Congress which was to be held in Armenia for the first time since 1919. Maroukhian complied with Ter-Petrosyan's request, stating that the ARF would not incite civil unrest in the homeland. The World Congress had to be postponed and convened later in another venue.

Maroukhian could do little but watch from Athens as relations between the Armenian government and the Dashnak-tinged elements of the diaspora worsened. In December 1994 Ter-Petrosyan banned the ARF from operating in Armenia, alleging that it was engaged in a campaign of terrorism and subversion.

Born in 1928 in Iran, Maroukhian was an engineer by training and profession, though politics was his passion. He joined the ARF as a young man and assumed leadership posts in the party, serving as chairman of the Central Committee in Iran. In 1963 the 18th ARF World Congress elected him to the Bureau. He served on the Bureau continuously, becoming chairman in 1971. He was based initially in Beirut but moved to Athens with his

family during the Lebanese civil war when the party headquarters transferred to Greece.

By the time of his expulsion from Armenia in 1992, Maroukhian's long political career at the helm of the Dashnaks was about to end. In July 1994, while he was swimming in the Mediterranean off Athens, he suffered a massive brain aneurysm. He fell into a coma from which he would never recover. He was cared for at home by his wife and family kept alive by tubes and fluids. He lost his position as Bureau chairman and was barely mentioned even by the Dashnak press.

This year Ter-Petrosyan's successor as Armenian president, Robert Kocharyan, moved to defuse the hostility to the Dashnaks in Armenia itself. In May he lifted the ban on the party and revoked Ter-Petrosyan's ban on Maroukhian's entry into Armenia. But by this time Maroukhian was unaware of his political rehabilitation in what he considered his homeland.

Although he was preparing to move permanently to live in Armenia at the time of his expulsion, Maroukhian never fulfilled his dream. Armenia will however be his resting place.

FELIX CORLEY

Hrair Maroukhian, politician: born Kermanshah, Iran 1928; Chairman, Dashnak Bureau 1971-92; married 1958 Anahit Ter-Sarkissian (two sons, two daughters); died Athens 21 December 1998.

Archie Moore

IT IS one of the boxing game's great adages that the measure of a boxer's spirit is his ability to accept defeat and, more importantly, to get up after a knockdown, writes Frank Gray. Archie Moore (obituary by Bob Mee, 11 December) fought many wars – notably against Rocky Marciano, whom he knocked down once but who rose up and pounded his way through Moore's

pinpoint punching to win by a knockout in the ninth round.

Despite the defeat, Moore – who was 41 – proved he was far from finished when, on an arctic night in Montreal on 10 December 1958, he defended his light-heavyweight title against the Commonwealth champion Yvon Durelle, a French-Canadian from Baie Ste Anne, New Brunswick. The partisan crowd at

the Montreal forum, mainly used for ice hockey, bayed for Moore's blood and were nearly given it in the opening seconds when Durelle felled Moore with a devastating right hand.

Moore struggled to his feet within a microsecond of being counted out, only to be knocked down twice more in that round, both for nine-counts. The screaming crowd of 18,000 – sensing a rare world title for

a Canadian fighter – saw Moore knocked from rope to rope for five rounds, but then had to see the opportunity slip away as Moore put on what many regarded as one of boxing's greatest comebacks.

By the seventh round, the muscular Durelle was in retreat and by the 11th, when he was knocked out, he had been down four times. The two fought again the following August

but Moore made no mistakes and dispatched Durelle in three rounds.

One of Moore's “tricks” was his famed wrap-around defence, in which, when under attack, he literally wrapped his arms around his face and peeked out from between his forearms. “You see, I was a bad little boy,” he liked to tell people, “and my mama had to whip me a lot; this is the way I learned how to defend myself.”

It was ironic, then, that Moore, long retired, was in the heavyweight champion George Foreman's corner when he fought Muhammad Ali in Zaire in 1974. But it was Ali, not Foreman, who employed a peek-a-hoo defence, which he used while Foreman punched himself into exhaustion, leaving himself ripe for a knockout in the eighth round.

Moore has always lacked a good

biographer. George Plimpton, the New York writer, editor and bon vivant, when asked if he might take it on, shook his head. He had written about Moore before – his 1959 account of his sparring session with Moore in which he paid the price for landing a lucky punch. “You know something,” he recalled, “he broke my nose.” He looked like it still had 40 years on.

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

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CHURCH SERVICES

CHRISTMAS EVE AND CHRISTMAS DAY

CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL: 23 December 8am HC; 10am Matins, Evensong; 11am Sung Eucharist, Missa brevis in B flat (Mozart); The Archbishop, 3.15pm Evensong and Carol, Dyson in D.

YORK MINSTER: 23 December 8am, 10am HC; 10am Sung Eucharist, Schubert in G; The Archbishop, 11.45am Matins, Ireland in F; The Very Rev Raymond Farnell, 4pm Evensong, Aston in F.

BIRMINGHAM CATHEDRAL: 24 December 11.30pm Midnight Mass, The Very Rev Peter Berry; 25 December 8am Morning Prayer, 9.15am HC; 11am Sung Eucharist, The Right Rev Mark Satter.

BLACKBURN CATHEDRAL: 24 December 11.30pm Midnight Communion, The Provost, 23 December 8am HC; 9.15am Choral Masses; 10.30am Christmas Eucharist, The Bishop.

BRADFORD CATHEDRAL: 24 December 11.30pm First Communion of Christmas, Aston set; 25 December 8am HC; 10.15am HC, The Bishop.

BRISTOL CATHEDRAL: 24 December 11.30pm Midnight Eucharist, Mass of the Nativity (Chapier), The Dean, 23 December 8.40am Matins; 10am Festal Eucharist, St Nicholas mass (Haydn), The Bishop, 3.30pm Evensong.

BURY ST EDMUNDS: 24 December 11.30pm Midnight Eucharist, Mass of the Nativity (Chapier), The Dean, 23 December 8.40am Matins; 10am Festal Eucharist, St Nicholas mass (Haydn), The Bishop, 3.30pm Evensong.

CARLISLE CATHEDRAL: 24 December 11.30pm Midnight Eucharist, Mass of the Nativity (Chapier), The Dean, 23 December 8.40am Matins; 10am Festal Eucharist, St Nicholas mass (Haydn), The Bishop, 3.30pm Evensong.

CHELMSFORD CATHEDRAL: 24 December 11.30pm Midnight Mass, Missa of the Nativity (Chapier), The Dean, 23 December 8.40am Matins; 10am Festal Eucharist, St Nicholas mass (Haydn), The Bishop, 3.30pm Evensong.

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Choristers at King's College, Cambridge

10am Matins; 11.15am Sung Eucharist; 3.30pm Choral Evensong.

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BANGOR CATHEDRAL: 24 December 11.30pm First Mass of Christmas, Ireland in C; The Dean, 23 December 8.40am Matins; 10am Festal Eucharist, St Nicholas mass (Haydn), The Bishop, 3.30pm Evensong.

BRECON CATHEDRAL: 24 December 11.30pm First Mass of Christmas, Ireland in C; The Dean, 23 December 8.40am Matins; 10am Festal Eucharist, St Nicholas mass (Haydn), The Bishop, 3.30pm Evensong.

CARDIFF Llandaff Cathedral: 24 December 11.30pm First Mass of Christmas, Ireland in C; The Dean, 23 December 8.40am Matins; 10am Festal Eucharist, St Nicholas mass (Haydn), The Bishop, 3.30pm Evensong.

NEWPORT CATHEDRAL: 24 December 11.30pm First Mass of Christmas, Ireland in C; The Dean, 23 December 8.40am Matins; 10am Festal Eucharist, St Nicholas mass (Haydn), The Bishop, 3.30pm Evensong.

ST ASAPH CATHEDRAL: 24 December 11.30pm First Mass of Christmas, Ireland in C; The Dean, 23 December 8.40am Matins; 10am Festal Eucharist, St Nicholas mass (Haydn), The Bishop, 3.30pm Evensong.

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ST DAVID'S CATHEDRAL: 24 December 11.30pm First Mass of Christmas, Ireland in C; The Dean, 23 December 8.40am Matins; 10am Festal Eucharist, St Nicholas mass (Haydn), The Bishop, 3.30pm Evensong.

The seasonal silence of a blank greeting

IT IS Christmas and therefore time for churches to attempt once more to say something meaningful about a season that seems to have lost its way. The difficulty seems to be in finding the right words, as many a church noticeboard will amply testify.

These wayside pulpits have, over the years, made numerous attempts to remind the passing public of "the reason for the season". In recent times they have come up with naff lines like "Give Jesus your Christmas Presence" or dubious attempts to get really modern with the Bad Hair Day line - "You're a virgin, you've just given birth, and now three kings have shown up..."

The trouble is that such slogans are more likely to have raised a chuckle among wet and wintry churchgoers than to have appealed to those beyond the frontiers of faith. This time last year the Christian Advertising Network tried to address that fact with a poster which read: "Christmas - copyright: It's not a genuine Christmas without Church". Sympathetic as I am to the organisation and its mission, I beg to differ. Nobody "owns" Christmas. The patent on a "genuine" Christmas is not the property of the Church, and never has been. Christmas belongs to the people; and if the Church owns many interpretations of its meaning, it cannot lay claim to all of them.

Launcelot Andrewes, in his Christmas Day sermon of 1620, describes the incarnation of Christ as "the Word that cannot speak". In using this phrase, he meant to draw his listeners to the powerlessness of Christ. He also points to the heart of the problem for religious advertising.

In contemporary life it is the image which is generally accepted to carry the greatest power. But religion, and particularly Christianity, communicates primarily through words rather than images: it is aural and oral rather than visual; cognitive rather than expressive. Apart from the cross or a crucifix, Christianity has no logo for its logos; little that appears to com-

municate effectively in the modern-day public domain. It could be argued that the most effective forms of Christian advertising are visual. Cathedrals are sermons in stone; paintings homilies on canvas. Yet, whilst there is some truth in the maxim that "the camera is a blunt instrument compared to a pen and the imagination", the relationship between words and images has changed in contemporary culture. Today, once more, much as in the medieval times of mass illiteracy, it is the image that takes us to the text.

More than that the Bible is no longer a principal source of morality, functioning as a rule book; rather it has been transformed into source of spirituality, which acts as a guide. Its stories have superseded its didactic as the well-spring of its power. Thus, the meaning of the Good Samaritan is more important than the Ten Commandments - even assuming that the latter could be remembered in any detail by anyone.

Into this milieu it is the image which speaks with most potency. Secular advertising understands this well. Benetton, the clothes manufacturer, has run ads for many years that use no text to convey the "United Colours of Benetton" global message. Interestingly many of them exploit situations where once religious imagery would have held sway. Recent ads have included a military cemetery of white crosses, with a green

grass background. Another centred on a family grieving around an emaciated and dying man. Another on a birth. And Benetton has even exploited overtly religious imagery with a controversial shot of a monk and a nun, both dressed in black and white robes, exchanging a kiss.

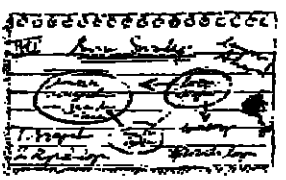
The images are striking for their simplicity: they cover themes such as the commonality of humanity, peace, reconciliation, life and death. Without using words, the ads speak through the pictures to the themes implied in the words "united" and "colours". They convey a moral message, arresting the viewer and inviting reflection.

Why can't the churches do the same? One answer to this must lie in the recurring tradition of iconoclasm which strove to suppress images in places of worship. They did so, in part, because images cannot be controlled in the way words can - people participate in stories and images at their own level: there is an in-built multiplicity of meaning; truth is plural. In their desire to delimit doctrine, reform and rule, Protestant and Catholic churches have frequently fled from the image and sought the sanctuary of words.

Yet Christ is not a text. Christmas is "the word made flesh" - a most striking visual image. And he comes as a child - the Speechless Word who is God. So, here is my suggestion for an advertisement for Christmas. A simple photograph of a mother and child sitting in some hovel. The child sucks greedily at the breast, and in the background, there is the shape of a figure trying to make a fire to keep them all warm.

This image - of interdependency, warmth, vulnerability, poverty and need - does not require any text. Yet it tells the Christmas story in a simple frame. It might not drive people to church. But it might at least make us stop for a moment and think, as we pass by with the last-minute shopping, hurrying home to our own Christmas.

Martyn Percy is Director of the Lincoln Theological Institute, Sheffield University



LITERARY NOTES CEDRIC CULLINGFORD

A writer who was too famous too early

THE VERY name of Mrs Humphry Ward suggested to subsequent generations an old-fashioned notion of the great and the good. Not only was she born an Arnold but she actually did carry out a great deal of charitable work. She was mildly satirised by Aldous Huxley in *Eyeless in Giza* as well as by Ezra Pound: "And he talked about the Great Mary / and said 'Mr Pound is shocked at my levity' / When it turned out he meant Mrs Ward." He also paints her as an awesome personality meeting out good to "her cripples". In fact Mrs Humphry Ward was practical rather than lofty.

She knew, for example, the ways in which committees work: they taught her that ideas were only interesting in terms of the way in which they were talked about or otherwise connected to the wider world. Her attitude towards them was as equivocal as her attitude towards society.

Lady Barbara was a committee woman, indefatigable and indomitable. She lived and glowed in a chronic state of overwork for which no one but herself saw the necessity. (*The Making of Lydia*)

The problem is that this portentous reputation also clings to her novels. This is a pity. And it is also completely inaccurate. As a result all the novels that were so admired by Henry James remain out of print.

Mrs Humphry Ward reflects the fate of one too famous too early and for the wrong reason. Her first book *Robert Elsmere*, published in 1888. It was reviewed earnestly and at length by WE Gladstone, who dwelt almost exclusively on the philosophical argument. The book deals with enlightened doubt, with the question of the extent to which morality and spirituality can be separated from the Christian faith. It is a novel of ideas rather than a good novel. Its fame dominated Mrs Ward's subsequent reputation so that even her lightness of touch was read as if she were still as weighty, and as faintly ridiculous, as in this book.

The novels that Mrs Humphry Ward wrote from *Lady Rose's Daughter* in 1903 to *Eltham House* in 1915 are ironic and acute satires on Edwardian society. They analyse not political ideas but the way that people use and manipulate them. They trace the decay of the landed families and their political influence. They delineate difficulties in relationships, especially in marriage. Even though she took on the propriety of her husband's name, her actual view of intimate relationships remained sharp and bleak.

Mrs Ward analyses the way in which ideas depend on personal relationships, and the way that politics depends on personal ambition. She depicts

Cedric Cullingford is the author of *Children's Literature and its Effects* (Cassell, £15.99)

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

DEATHS

America the beautiful

No more Britpop in '98. Not many Australian soap stars either. As for 'distaff distorto grunge-victims', well, they've seen better days. No, 1998 was the year in which American pop began a heady renaissance. The evidence? Our critics' choice of 10 CDs of the year



BECK
Mutations
Geffen

PERHAPS THIS year's most intriguing development has been the end of the assumption that musical innovation will automatically originate on the dance floor. Not that stadium behemoths will ever stop seeking vindication in the fairy dust of an over-priced remix, but an increasing volume of traffic is now moving the other way, as horny-handed beat-farmers come down from the hills in an urgent quest for old school rock charisma. It's a manor of which Beck is undisputed boss, and his *Mutations* – supposedly just a bit of fun with his touring band while gearing up for a "proper" next album – is a gleaming monument to its diverse possibilities. Owing as much to The Beatles' *Revolver* as The Beasties' *Paul's Boutique*, these are space-age bachelor-pad cowboy lamentations of transcendent and enduring quality. Honourable mentions to Air's *Moon Safari* (Virgin), and Glaswegian Arab Strap's rumbustious *Philophobia* (Chemikal Underground).

BEN THOMPSON

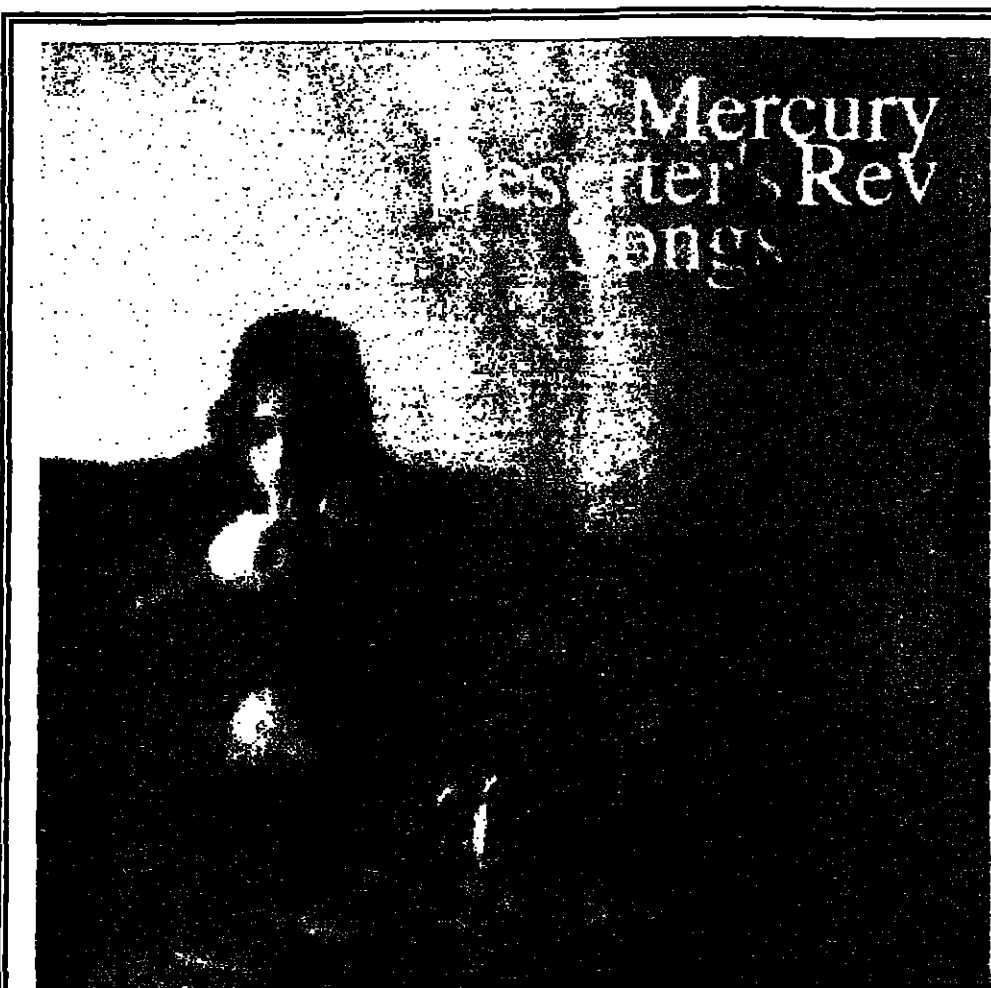


AIR
Moon Safari
Virgin

THE PRAISE heaped upon Air is as much a result of their repair job on French music as the fact that they have produced the most bewitching retro-futuristic album of the year. They have often been aligned with the clattering vibrations of their compatriots, Daft Punk, but, in truth, they couldn't be further apart. *Moon Safari* is an otherworldly foray into some of the more tender moments of the last three decades. "Kelly Watch the Stars" and "Sexy Boy" epitomise Air's sound: soothing Serge Gainsbourg-style vocals, processed through a vocoder and set against Seventies' funk-jazz and Eighties' synth pop soundscapes. Smart and fluffy, uplifting and melancholy.

If I had to choose an album to accompany a stroll on the moon, it would indeed be this one. For more smart retro-futurism and vocoder wizardry, listen to the Beastie Boys' *Hell No* (Grand Royal) and Bran Van 300's chaotic, self-titled debut album (Capitol).

PIONA STURGES



MERCURY REV Deserter's Songs v2

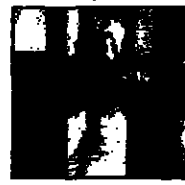
IN A year during which forward motion seemed for the most part stalled, bands continued to trawl through previous eras in search of inspiration, none more successfully than Mercury Rev. This was no simple Weller-style retro-rock appropriation, however. The heartbreakingly beautiful *Deserter's Songs* used half-remembered hints of old melodies or arrangements as poignant sepia-tint coloration for songs concerned, in part, with the very nature of recollection and reflection. It's an extraordinarily

emotional record, somehow managing to sound both melancholic and euphoric, suggesting that for Mercury Rev the past is a much more complex, ambivalent territory than that encountered in, say, Oasis's cheery celebrations of old ways.

In this respect, *Deserter's Songs* is more representative of the current wave of American retro-rockers than of its British equivalent. For unlike the second-hand sound-stylists of Britpop, such bands as Sparkhorse, Lambchop and The Jon

Spencer Blues Explosion, and such solo artists as Beck and Gillian Welch, are all inspired as much by the pioneer nature of older music forms as they are by the music itself. The immediate result has been a succession of graceful, exploratory albums, whose appeal grows, rather than diminishes, with familiarity. Honourable mentions also go to Sparkhorse's *Good Morning Spider* (Parlophone) and Lambchop's *What Another Man Spills* (City Slang).

ANDY GILL



LYLE LOVETT
Step Inside This House
Universal

TEN YEARS ago this sort of thing was called New Country. New Country wore a cowboy hat, not with irony but with contingent pride; it cleaved to Country idioms but aligned itself intellectually with the world beyond Nashville's moral catchment; it was neat and tidy on the outside, but scruffy in its soul. Now it's a supporting leg of the coffee-table mainstream – not alt-country but art-country: currently white American pop's most sophisticated property.

Lovett will politely concede that, if nothing else, this double-length collection of other Texans' songs enables him to duck questions about whether he's still boiling his head over Julia. What we must concede is that this is the most playable length-and-line art-country record there's been, by a man. Texas sounds like a real place for once, inhabited by real people. You should also hear Emmylou Harris's elegant *Spyboy* (Grapevine) and Gillian Welch's grim *Hell Among the Yearnings* (Almo Sounds).

NICK COLEMAN



VARIOUS ARTISTS
The Voice of the People
Topic

A SURVEY of the traditional music of these islands ought to be an impressive affair. It ought to be grave, monumental, desiccated, worthy, unlistenable; it should chafe in its unwearable work boots. In fact, Reg Hall and Tony Engle's epic, 20-volume *Voice of the People* "anthology" is a delight: it is monumental and to a large extent grave, for sure, but it is also moving, involving and enlightening, and, like all the best narratives, keeps you wanting to find out what happens next. Also, you don't have to fork out 300 fat ones for the privilege of owning the whole thing in a boxed set; you buy it piecemeal or you don't buy it at all.

This has been a good year for tradition-driven music, both here and in the States. Here, Eliza Carthy deservedly got on the Mercury shortlist for her imaginatively worldly *Red Rice* double album, while dad Martin made a splendid comeback of his own with *Signs of Life*. (No compensation, though, for the loss of Lal Waterson.)

NICK COLEMAN



TORI AMOS
From The Choirgirl Hotel
EastWest

THIS ONE threw us for a loop. The flame-haired temptress with a million voices in her head spoke in her own on *Choirgirl*, an unleashed, autobiographical affair. Cathartic release could be due to the fact that Tori's no longer a relationship-damaged waif, but a smugly happy wife. With that in the mix, a side we hadn't seen roared kaleidoscopically off the disc. Bashing her Bosendorfer alongside heavy bass and electric guitar, Tori went Led Zep. Elsewhere, we had references to Jackie Kennedy, David Cassidy, Pandora and Persephone – Amos was this year's chart-topping goddess.

Other contenders? Almost alone, Polly Harvey carried the flag for distaff distorto-grunge victims. *Is This Desire?* (Island) reached uncharted territory, so far west of Yeovil. It seemed located in America's desert badlands. Lucinda Williams's *Car Wheels on a Gravel Road* (Mercury) took a more rural American route, her sweet folk voice telling us of the heat and dust, the beat-up and broken-down.

GLYN BROWN



4 HERO
Two Pages
Talkin' Loud

THIS YEAR saw the various genres of the UK dance scene in nostalgic mood. Such a climate even touched the future-obsessed drum'n'bass scene, most engagingly in the case of the breakthrough scientists, 4 Hero. In *Two Pages* they crafted an album which updates the classic soul of Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On* and Stevie Wonder's *Innervisions* with Detroit techno-inspired drum'n'bass. True, the album's inspirations are all drawn from the past, yet the duo rarely overdo the nostalgic reverie bit. They take their source material and content it through a vibrant fusion of technology and imagination. Similarly inspiring were Jurassic 5 and Faithless. The former's brilliant eponymous album (Pan Pias) combines the word play of old school hip hop with new school turntablism. Faithless fused classic UK house, the moodiness of Massive Attack and the energy of Motown to create the unique sound of their stunning second album, *Sunday Syn* (Cheeky).

MARTIN JAMES



ELLIOTT SMITH
XO
Dreamworks

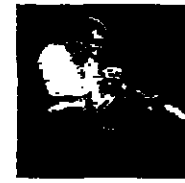
OF THE four Elliott Smith albums released in Britain in 1998, *XO* was the last, and by some distance, the best. Smith's hazy lyricism and lazy vocal were the key factors in a marvellous, gentle record. He has a knack for crafting obtuse, beguiling character sketches

and embedding them in the memory with expertly deployed one-liners: "They took your life apart/And called your failures art" might be a lament for every consumptive singer-songwriter who has preceded him.

Smith is, of course, an obvious heir to a lineage that includes Bob Dylan, Paul Simon, Elvis Costello and Kurt Cobain, but he's also the brightest of a new bunch of unfairly disregarded American songwriters. Conventional wisdom seems to be that American rock died with

Cobain. In truth, it's quite healthy – it just doesn't sound that way. Along with Ben Folds, E of Eels and Mark Linkous of Sparkhorse, Smith has taken the familiar grunge themes of dislocation and alienation and examined them from a more reflective, less histrionic, and far less self-abasing perspective. *XO* is a masterpiece. Honourable mentions should also go to Sparkhorse's *Good Morning Spider* and Eels' gloomy *Electro-Shock Blues*.

ANDREW MUELLER

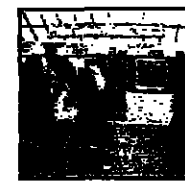


MILES DAVIS
The Complete Bitches Brew Sessions
Columbia Legacy

THE IMPULSE! label is all-round jazz re-issue champ for 1998. It's given stylish new life to its Coltrane back catalogue and is now embarked on the noble project of re-releasing the late-Sixties/Seventies New Thing, as if it were indeed a new thing.

However, the label responsible for the single most impressive re-con job of the year is Sony's Columbia Legacy imprint. Their orgiastic slobber over Miles Davis's *Bitches Brew* sessions was profoundly worthy, not merely for its textured cardboard and aluminium finish, certainly not for the accompanying rubric, but for the complex loveliness of the music itself, which benefits hugely from being remastered to perfection and then laid out schematically over the length of four CDs as if it were, indeed, all part of the same musical continuum. Honourable mentions go to Coltrane's *The Complete Classic Quartets* (Impulse!) and Tina Brooks's heart-breaking *Back to the Tracks* (Blue Note).

NICK COLEMAN



RITA MARCOTULLI
The Woman Next Door
Label Bleu

EVEN WHEN a musician goes into the studio and records his or her current live set, a context of sorts still emerges according to the dominant mood, texture or tempo of the event. But when the setting of the context precedes the recording, we can end up with an album as complete, as satisfying, and as profound as *The Woman Next Door* by the Italian pianist Rita Marcotulli. Inspired by the films of François Truffaut, Marcotulli has written a suite of tunes that relate to different themes or characters, and then cast them for various permutations of a large ensemble. The result is wide-ranging music held together by the central concept and recurring motifs. It works as a whole in a way that very few jazz albums ever manage to do.

Two other albums of governed mood: the American pianist Brad Mehldau's *Songs* (Warner Bros.) and the veteran soul-jazz vocalist Terry Callier's *Timepiece* (Talkin' Loud/Verve).

PHIL JOHNSON

Nothing more than this? Depends what you mean

LEONARD BERNSTEIN'S *Candide*. That's how the London Symphony Orchestra billed it here – presumably because listing all its collaborators on the title page of the programme would have left little room for anything else. Too many cooks spoiled the book. That is what happened to *Candide*, the musical. In the best of all possible worlds, it might just have worked: Voltaire's little novella turned very big opera. But Lillian Hellman – who provided the show's original book – had more

feeling for the political agenda than she did for the musical comedy, and subsequent rescue operations only added to the confusion. To quote one of its songs: "Words, Words, Words". No doubt about it, words have been the undoing of *Candide*. I've yet to see it work in the theatre, though Trevor Nunn and John Caird – who stage it at the National Theatre next spring – are plainly optimistic. So was *Candide*, of course.

There remains, though, that score – a marvel of pith and pastiche

and shameless piracy. A little Gounod here, a little Rossini or Verdi there, a lot of Gilbert and Sullivan everywhere. All of it cohesively melded through the wit and wisdom of Bernstein's own musical voice. Bernstein's music is *Candide*'s music, always aspirational, always reaching for the octave and beyond.

Nine years ago, London's Barbican Hall jumped to *Candide*'s tunes. Bernstein himself (in what was his last London engagement) couriered the conducted tour with a little help

from Dr Pangloss, better known as his old sparring partner Adolph Green. This time around, Nicholas Grace – rather more dexterous, physically and verbally – did the honours, wryly understating the topicality of his updated narrative. A little more pace might better have conveyed the whistle-stop nature of

Voltaire's "picaresque" plotting, but his energy was, at very least, infectious. Not so the lacklustre conducting of Kent Nagano.

If the syncope home straight of the Overture is not somehow impatient for the fun, froth, and frolic to come, then the chances are it's not going to be there. It wasn't. Neither was Nagano. Tempi were plodding, rhythms lazy. This was a soufflé that never rose. The raucous flamenco climax of the Old Lady's Tango "I am

Easily Assimilated" is an invitation to join in the foot-stamping, brazen trumpets whacking out the offer you can't refuse. But for all Patricia Routledge's best efforts with the castanets, lift-off was postponed. Routledge stole the show. Her comic timing put some of the zest back into it. So, too, did Thomas Allen's deliciously sibilant Maximilian. Then there was the Jerry and June show – Jerry Hadley (Candide) and June Anderson (Cunegonde), sole survivors of the performances

from nearly a decade ago. Anderson still sports the dizzying E-flats, but not the irony that can make "Glitter and Be Gay" so killingly funny. Hadley is no longer quite so fresh-faced or fresh-voiced, not least in those idealistic and once honeyed accents above the stage. But he means what he sings, and that in itself made the disillusionment of "Nothing More Than This" the most poignant of tributes to a composer who never really knew just how good he was.

EDWARD SECKERSON

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A dose of the winter blues

MUSICAL

SOUTH PACIFIC
SHEFFIELD CRUCIBLE

ON THE first pre-Broadway tour of *South Pacific*, Richard Rodgers reputedly broke up one of those smoke-filled late-night production meetings where people agonise over what to adjust and fix. "Fellas," he announced, "this show is perfect. Let's go to bed." And now, nearly 50 years later, there are few who would want to dispute such a claim. It's a struggle to remind yourself of this, though, when confronted with a revival as rosy as that directed by Deborah Paige at the Sheffield Crucible.

The poster invites you to "banish all your winter blues" with this masterly musical love story of an ageing cultured expatriate Frenchman and an unsophisticated young nurse from Arkansas who are thrown together during the war in the Pacific and almost come to

grief over the subject of race. Criss-crossed with duckboards, the Crucible's thrust stage certainly pushes the sun-kissed sea and sand into the audience's midst, with the undistinguished band visible at the back. Introducing choreography to a show that originally was notable for dispensing with it, Peter Darling gives the engaging line-up of sexually frustrated GIs a horry horripape and, as "There is Nothing Like a Dame" reaches its climax, a sort of *Half-Monty* flourish.

But there was so much coughing and spluttering in the theatre that you didn't know whether you were in an auditorium or a sanatorium. Some

of this local croakiness seems to have infected the delectable Janie Dee, whose lanky, impish Nellie was in sadly enfeebled voice. When she failed to put full-throated rapture into the declaration "I'm in love with a wonderful guy", you tended to sympathise because Mark Adams's hectoringly sung Emile has none of the romantic reserve and mystery necessary for this role.

Intermittently entertaining, the production is too often misjudged. I have always been a fervent supporter of colour-blind casting. But drama which turns on the question of colour and race constitutes an exception. Given that Nellie's distaste for the idea that Emile is the widower of a Polynesian woman is a major stumbling-block in their romance, it makes little sense to cast two

children who look as if they are of clearly different races as the offspring of that union. And while the black actor Cornell John is extremely winning as Luther Billis, the unit's comically unsuccessful would-be war profiteer, colour-blind casting again raises problems. When he and Nellie perform "Honey-bun" at the Thanksgiving Follies – she as a male sailor and Luther as a dusky native maiden with coconuts for breasts – the fact that the number is a raucous travesty of another racially sensitive relationship in the show loses its sharpness if Luther is already a non-white.

Some enchanted evening? No, some way short of that.

A version of this review appeared in later editions of yesterday's paper

PAUL TAYLOR



Shades of 'The Conversation': Will Smith and Gene Hackman take paranoia into overdrive

Bugs, boys and big bangs

Surveillance is fast becoming Hollywood's theme du jour. First *The Truman Show* dramatised the comical yet paranoid fantasy of a life unwittingly spent under the scrutiny of 5,000 concealed cameras. Then Brian De Palma, always a keenly voyeuristic director, explored the sinister new possibilities of surveillance technology in *Sucker Eyes*, which featured an astonishing elevated tracking shot over a cross-section of hotel bedrooms - part recording abject, part peeping Tom. Indeed, in a year when Bill Clinton has found his privacy impossible to defend, the conspiracy theorist's credo that Big Brother is watching us feels increasingly plausible.

In Tony Scott's new thriller *Enemy of the State*, paranoia goes into overdrive. The tone is set in the credit sequence, a hysterical montage of grainy swoops and zooms filmed from on high by panoptic spy satellites: here is the security state in action, we're being told, as street riots and rowdy '80s are coldly monitored from above and swiftly quashed by the baton-wielding authorities on the ground.

About to experience the full might of these digital thieves of liberty is a young DC labour lawyer, Robert Clayton Dean (Will Smith), who is buying his wife Christmas lingerie when an old college friend learns past him out of the shop and thence to an early grave, courtesy of a collision with a black truck. Unbeknown to Robert, his late friend slipped him a tape that captures the murder of a senior congressman by rogue forces in the National Security Agency.

The chief rogue in question is one Thomas Brian Reynolds (Jon Voight), who understandably wants to get his hands on the tape. He decides to make Robert the target of a smear campaign, sending in his spooks to bug the lawyer's whole wardrobe - pen, watch, cell phone, shoes, trousers - and then discredit his reputation. Soon enough, he finds his name splashed all over the newspapers as a philanderer; his wife (Regina King) kicks him out of the house, and, horror of horrors, all his credit cards are mysteriously cancelled. In desperation he turns for help to an old girlfriend, Rachel (Lisa Bonet), acting as intermediary for the mysterious Brill, a former intelli-

THE BIG PICTURE



ANTHONY QUINN
ENEMY OF THE STATE (15)
DIRECTOR: TONY SCOTT
STARRING: WILL SMITH,
GENE HACKMAN, JON VOIGHT
128 MINS

gence operative who has gone underground. That he's played by Gene Hackman is both the film's trump card and a reminder of its source, namely Francis Ford Coppola's *The Conversation* (1974), in which Hackman played the surveillance genius Harry Caul. Brill is essentially Harry 25 years later, right down to the black spectacles and the wire-meshed lair

full of bugging equipment. Just in case we miss the parallel, there's a tense rendezvous in a public square that's a pure homage to the opening scene of Coppola's film.

The difference between the two films, however, is conspicuous - and instructive. *The Conversation* was a thriller, but was also a study in one man's spiritual desolation; Harry, a Catholic and a loner, is guilt-ridden by a bugging job he once did which resulted in a grisly double murder, compounding his obsession with privacy - he won't let anybody near him. You can watch *The Conversation* over and over and still find some new detail each time. How you long for such nuance in *Enemy of the State*. Sure, there's a creepiness in its early stages as Robert gets sucked into the vortex of technological tyranny, and Will Smith, stripped to his underwear at one stage, does a good impersonation of flummoxed decency.

Yet the stamp of its makers - producer Jerry Bruckheimer and director Scott - inevitably begins to show through. For example, it's not enough that Brill and Robert simply flee their bolt-hole once the NSA locate its

whereabouts - no, their exit has to be followed by the building being blown sky-high in a humungous explosion; a Bruckheimer special. The film becomes a sequence of chases, down a tunnel, along railway sidings, across hotel roofs, all set to the shuddering percussive soundtrack beloved of these starved-for-action movies. All that's missing is the signature Bruckheimer shot of the leading characters walking abreast in slo-mo towards camera; fine if they're fighter pilots or astronauts, of course, but heroic group shots of leather-jacketed goons with ear-pieces and hand-guns might look a touch out of place.

Throughout, the editing has the frenetic, blink-and-it's-gone intensity of a trailer, as if a pause for thought would forfeit an audience's attention. This, I'm afraid, is what the Hollywood blockbuster has come to. Even when it alights on a potentially interesting idea, it hasn't the wit or nerve to let character take precedence over spectacle - chases, fireball explosions, the full shooting match. Maybe this explains why so many movies are beginning to look like one another. Now there's a conspiracy for you.

ALSO SHOWING

- WHAT DREAMS MAY COME VINCENT WARD (15)
■ THE MIGHTY PETER CHELSON (PG)
■ THE APPLE SAMIRA MAKHMALBAF (PG)



Robin Williams in 'What Dreams May Come'

LOADED WITH state-of-the-art special effects, Vincent Ward's *What Dreams May Come* looks like the most expensive therapy session ever put together. Robin Williams, at his most ingratiating, plays a paediatrician whose family is dogged by death. First the family Labrador has to be put down; then his two children are killed in an off-screen accident; then he buys the big one in a freeway car crash and fetches up in an afterlife based on the impressionist landscapes painted by his wife (Annabella Sciorra). Driven insane by bereavement, she has committed suicide and been consigned to hell, so Williams, with the help of celestial tour guides Cuba Gooding Jr and Max Von Sydow, journeys downwards à la Orpheus to rescue her.

If any of the above has the whiff of dung, you're definitely in the right neighbourhood. While the production design has a breathtaking depth of colour (complete with art history references to Monet and Caspar David Friedrich) the film sets the alarm bells ringing from the moment Williams and Sciorra meet on a Swiss lake and declare themselves soulmates. Once death moves in, it's cue for a two-hour sob-fest in which earnest New Age waffle is exchanged with such reverence you'd think it had been penned by Aristotle.

In fact, this is the work of Ron Bass, whose fondness for sentimental verbiage (he also wrote *Waiting to Exhale*) made me wonder whether he hadn't missed his vocation in life as a Hallmark Card staff writer. "Thought is real, physical is the illusion," somebody remarks. I wish that were true, then I could simply have "thought" I'd seen *What Dreams May Come*, and skipped the "physical" experience of its butt-numbing boredom.

More mystical whimsy in Peter Chelson's *The Mighty*, a tale of two boys who don't fit in. Max (Elden Henson) is a teenage giant and a slow learner; Kevin (Kieran Culkin) is a pint-sized intellectual with a degenerative disease. After their friendship is cemented by a shared regard for the legend of King Arthur, Max decides they'd work better in tandem and carries Kevin on his shoulders. Together they wow the basketball team, face off the school bullies and deal with the unwelcome return to the neighbourhood of Max's jailbird father. With an A-list cast in minor roles - Sharon Stone, Gena Rowlands, Harry Dean Stanton, Gillian Anderson - the film has its moments, but it does rather beg for our tears when a more softly-softer approach is required. You detect the Blackpool-born director straining in oblique directions which the American schmaltz of *The Mighty* simply can't accommodate.

The Apple is a peculiar first feature by Samira Makmalbaf, 17-year-old daughter of Mohsen Makmalbaf, the Iranian filmmaker. It recounts the true story, using the real family involved, of two innocent 12-year-old sisters who have been hidden from the world since birth. After neighbours complain to the authorities, a social worker (they have them in Tehran too) turns up at their home and forces their ancient, needy father to let them out. His reason for keeping them locked up: "My daughters are like flowers. They mustn't be exposed to the sun or they would soon fade." Dads, eh? The film's gentle humour comes to the fore once the girls are let loose to play hopscotch and munch apples, though concentration is vital for the film's leisurely pace to work. Once you've overcome somnolence, Makmalbaf's inquiry into family life casts a weird spell.

All films are on release from Baring Day

IN SATURDAY'S WEEKEND REVIEW

The black swan

Nadine Meisner meets Carlos Acosta, a new dance sensation

BRILLIANT...
the perfect Christmas present for everyone

"Impassable technical debut..."
- SUNDAY TIMES

"A gem... marvellous..."
- THE GUARDIAN

the Apple

STARTS SUN 27 DEC

RENOIR METRO

CRITIC'S CHOICE: THE TEN BEST FILMS OF 1998

ANTHONY QUINN

1/ Shall We Dance?

Watch people's faces go blank when you tell them that the best film of 1998 was a comedy about Japanese ballroom dancing. But it's true! Recounting the tale of a melancholy stiff who finds he's got rhythm, Masayuki Suo's film beautifully contrasts the formality of Japanese manners with the secret yearning to cut a dash on the dance floor.



'The Truman Show'



'In the Company of Men'

2/ Junk Mail

Norwegian Pal Sletaune's debut is a blackish comedy about a shift postman named Roy who likes pinching other people's mail. By a combination of nosiness and bad luck he involves himself in a Hitchcockian nightmare of stalking and blackmail. The only film this year I paid to watch again.



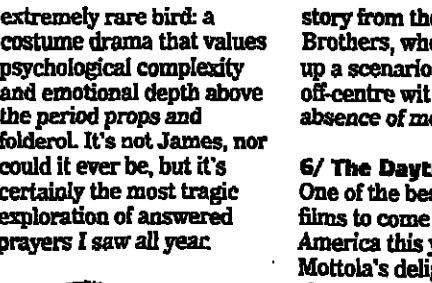
'The Big Lebowski'



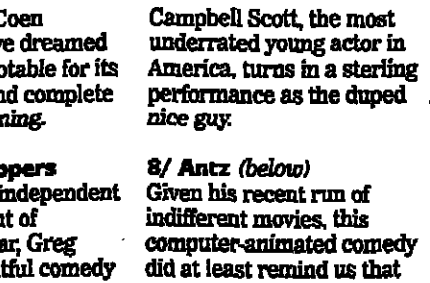
'The Wings of the Dove'

3/ In the Company of Men

A gripping and fantastically unpleasant essay in male insecurity and competitiveness, Neil LaBute's debut focuses upon two white-collar executives who scheme to avenge themselves on the opposite sex. The film takes a jaundiced look at company men in the Nineties, and you fear it may be telling us something like the truth.



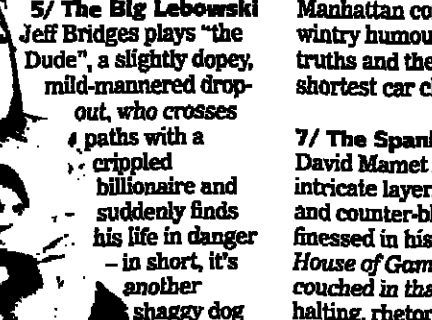
'The Big Lebowski'



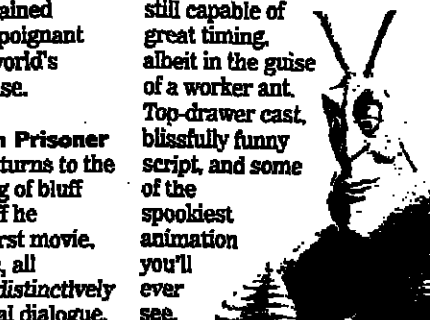
'The Wings of the Dove'

4/ The Wings of the Dove

Iain Softley's adaptation of the Henry James novel is an



'The Big Lebowski'



'The Wings of the Dove'

9/ The Truman Show

Perhaps not as great as some made it out to be, Peter Weir's satire on our enslavement to television was nevertheless an inspired and ingenious piece of movie-making. Jim Carrey also seized the opportunity to show he's a lot more more than an irritating rubber-faced contortionist.

10/ Zero Effect

Uh? Don't worry, hardly anyone else saw this small, but engagingly droll comedy, directed by first-timer Jake Kasdan (son of *The Big Chill* Lawrence). Starring Bill Pullman as a wigged-out private eye and Ben Stiller as his sidekick, it had the affable charm and modest intentions of a good TV pilot.

Turkey of the Year

Henry Jaglom's *Déjà Vu*, an improvised ensemble drama, was probably the most excruciating experience of the cinema year. His characters are the kind of awful chattering pseudos Woody Allen was satirising around 20 years ago, yet Jaglom for some bizarre reason takes them completely seriously. One nonsensical speech by Vanessa Redgrave concluded with the exhortation to "jump off the cliff of life", an option I would have willingly helped the whole cast fulfil.

"THIS CAPTIVATING DRAMA IS JUST WONDERFUL... SPIRITED, FUNNY AND UPLIFTING"

"A MOVIE OF EMOTIONAL DEPTH, HUMOUR AND GREAT HUMANITY."

Sharon Stone
Gena Rowlands
Harry Dean Stanton
Kieran Culkin
Elden Henson
and
Gillian Anderson



The quest for friendship is the noblest cause of all.

THE MIGHTY

Courage comes in all sizes.

STARTS DEC 26

RENOIR METRO

JAN 10 1999

CHRISTMAS EVE RADIO

RADIO 1

(97.9-98.8MHz FM)
6.30 Chris Moyles. **9.00** Simon Mayo. **12.00** Kevin Greening.
2.00 The Best of Land Show in the World. **4.00** Dave Pearce. **6.00** Pete Tong's Essential Selection. **8.00** Judge Jules. **11.00** Sanctified Dance Party. **1.00** Gilles Peterson. **4.00** - **9.00** Emma B.

RADIO 2

(88-90.2MHz FM)
6.00 Alex Lester. **7.30** Wake Up to Wogan. **9.30** Ken Bruce. **12.00** Steve Wright's Christmas Million Sellers. **2.00** Ed Stewart. **5.05** Johnnie Walker. **7.00** Saturday Night Fever. **8.00** Paul Jones. **9.00** Barry Took's Comedy Classics. **9.30** Love 40 - New Balls Please. **10.00** Paul Gambaccini. **11.00** Carols by Candlelight. **11.59** Pause for Thought. **12.00** Katrina Leskanich. **3.00** - **4.00** Mo Dutta.

RADIO 3

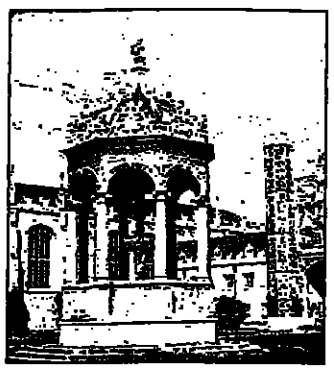
(90.2-92.4MHz FM)
6.00 On Air. **9.00** Masterworks. **10.30** Artist of the Week. **11.00** Sound Stories. **12.00** Composer of the Week: Bizet. **1.00** The Radio 3 Lunchtime Concert. **2.00** The BBC Orchestras. **4.00** Dival. **4.45** Music to Die For. **5.00** A Medieval Christmas. **5.30** Music Rooms. **6.00** Discovering Music with Leonard Slatkin. **7.00** Christmas Cocktails. **7.30** Performance on 3. Another chance to hear ten of the most memorable concerts of the 1998 BBC Proms season at the Royal Albert Hall, London. 4. Prom 65, given on 6 September, honoured the life and achievement of the late Sir Michael Tippett with a performance of his oratorio 'A Child of Our Time'. Deborah Riedel (soprano), Nora Gubisch (mezzo), Jerry Hadley (tenor), John Tomlinson (bass), London Symphony Chorus and Orchestra/Colin Davis. Beethoven, arr. Davis/Matthews: String Quartet in E flat, Op. 127. Tippett: A Child of Our Time. (R) **9.35** Postscript. Comedian and broadcaster Rainer Hersch

PICK OF THE DAY

SO FARAS Radio 4 is concerned, the message of Christmas is all about God, over-eating and end-of-year retrospectives. God is represented today with the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols (8pm R4) live from King's College Chapel in Cambridge (right), and by Midnight Mass from Lichfield Cathedral (11.30pm R4). Eating is represented by a

selection of short food-centred readings called *Petits Fours* scattered through the schedules between now and Boxing Day. Looking back on '98 are The Year in Westminster (8pm R4) with Boris Johnson and Steve Richards - no doubt taking great pains to avoid mentioning Peter Mandelson's sex life - and *Pick of the Year* (10pm R4).

Eating is represented by a



by Peter White. See *Pick of the Day*.

10.45 Book at Bedtime: Chosen for Christmas. Five stars read their chosen seasonal tale. 4. Derek Jacobi reads 'Christmas at Dingley Dell' from 'The Pickwick Papers' by Charles Dickens.

11.00 The Modern Magi. 'The Sands of Time'. In the first of two programmes, three modern magi retrace the steps taken by the Wise Men almost 2,000 years ago. Rowan Williams, Bishop of Monmouth, Professor Heather Couper, astronomer, and Paul Valley of the Independent set off across the Syrian desert to recreate the atmosphere of this exotic, mystical group and reflect on the aspirations of the present age.

11.30 Midnight Mass. See *Pick of the Day*.

12.30 The Late Book: Out of Her Senses.

12.45 Shipping Forecast.

1.00 As World Service.

5.30 World News.

5.45 Shipping Forecast.

5.40 Inshore Forecast.

5.45 Prayer for the Day.

5.47 - **6.00** Farming Today.

RADIO 4 LW

(198kHz)

9.45 - **10.00** Daily Service.

12.00 - **12.04** News Headlines: Shipping Forecast. **5.54** - **5.57** Shipping Forecast.

RADIO 5 LIVE

(693, 909kHz MW)

6.00 Breakfast.

9.00 Brian Hayes.

presents five personal and idiosyncratic studies of the music of our century. 4. 'The Rite Stuff'. An abbreviated guide to the great, the good and the ugly musical premieres.

9.55 Fibonacci Sequence. Introduced by Nicola Heywood. Thomas. Mozart: Oboe Quartet in F. K370. Beethoven: Quintet in E flat for piano and wind, Op. 16. **10.45** Book, Music and Lyrics. Six programmes in which Robert Cushman presents a personal view of musicals, with songs from original cast recordings - some familiar, some less well known. 3. 'Ziegfeld Follies of 1936'.

11.30 Jazz Notes.

12.00 Composer of the Week: Bach. (R)

1.00 - **6.00** Through the Night.

RADIO 4

(92.4-94.6MHz FM)

6.00 Today.

9.00 NEWS: In Our Time with Melvyn Bragg.

9.30 Carols for Choirs.

9.45 Serial: Scraps with Iannucci.

10.00 NEWS: Woman's Hour.

11.00 NEWS: From Our Own Correspondent.

11.30 Polyanna.

12.00 NEWS: You and Yours.

12.57 Weather.

1.00 The World at One.

1.30 Hidden Treasures.

2.00 NEWS: The Archers.

2.45 Afternoon Play: The Tea-house Detective.

3.00 NEWS: A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols. See *Pick of the Day*.

SATELLITE AND CABLE

PICK OF THE DAY

AN ACTOR habitually described as "lean and mean", Sean Bean (right) has cornered the market in strong, silent types (in that respect, playing Mellors in the BBC version of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* did him no end of good). He shoulders to similar effect in the satellite premiere of Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (8pm Sky Premier). He plays Count Vronsky, the aristocrat with whom the wealthy Anna (Sophie Marceau) starts a passionate,

but ultimately doomed affair.

Anthony Quinn once recalled Hollywood's initial reaction to him: "they said all I was good for was playing Indians." He soon proved them wrong, carving out a highly successful career in a wide range of roles stretching from his Oscar-winning display in *Lust for Life* to *Zorba the Greek*. He is the subject of tonight's Hollywood Hall of Fame (9.30pm Sky Cinema).

JAMES RAMPTON



Intensive Care: The Problem with Men (5.47-6.37). **11.00** Forensic Detectives (8.28-9.18). **12.00** Intensive Care: The Problem with Men (11.25-12.15). **1.00** Connection 2 by James Burke (8.57-9.47). **1.30** - **2.00** Ancient Warriors (9.03-9.53).

SKY ONE

6.00 Bringing Up Baby (1938) (7.00-7.50).

6.00 Father Brown (1954) (7.50-8.40).

8.00 Holiday Affair (1949) (12.00-12.50).

9.30 Hollywood Hall of Fame (8.28-9.18).

10.00 Hercules - the Legendary Journeys (19.00).

10.00 The New Adventures of Superman (1963).

10.00 The Oprah Winfrey Show (8.28-9.18).

10.00 The Special K Collection (8.28-9.18).

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SKY PREMIER

6.00 A Christmas Carol (1984) (4.55-5.50).

8.00 Angels in the Attic (1997) (3.38-4.33).

10.00 The Preacher's Wife (1996) (5.47-6.42).

12.00 A Christmas Carol (1984) (5.00-5.55).

1.45 Angels in the Attic (1997) (5.18-6.13).

3.45 I'll Be Home for Christmas (1998) (3.38-4.33).

